

deo non fortuna fretus





Edmond Alaire.

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE
WILLIAM HENRY SMITH, M.P.



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Miss Handbreen and Daughter
1860

LIFE AND TIMES

OF

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

WILLIAM HENRY SMITH, M.P.

BY

SIR HERBERT MAXWELL, BART., M.P.

WITH

PORTRAITS AND OTHER ILLUSTRATIONS

*Civis talis, qualis et prudentissimus
et fortunâ optimâ esse debet.*—CICERO.

IN TWO VOLUMES

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LIFE AND TIMES

OF

THE RIGHT HON. W. H. SMITH.

CHAPTER I.

1878-1880.

WAR WITH AFGHANISTAN—MOTION OF CENSURE ON MINISTERS—
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By the time that Smith returned to England from the East, war had been declared with

Afghanistan, and Parliament was summoned to meet on 5th December. For the fourth time during 1878 the Government were to be arraigned on a motion of censure—this time moved by Mr Whitbread—and the House was to be called on to declare that it disapproved of the policy which had led to hostilities; for the fourth time the attack was to be repulsed: the Government obtained a majority of 101 in a House of 555 members.

During the holidays an event took place which was the cause of much rejoicing in the family at Greenlands. On January 2, Miss Leach, the daughter of Mrs Smith by her former marriage, was wedded to Captain W. Codrington, R.N.

Smith's only son, Frederick, who had lately gone to school, was home at this time for the Christmas holidays, and told a funny little story about his experience. The boys had asked him if his father was the man who had the bookstalls, to which he answered, "Yes." Then they asked him if he did anything else. "Oh yes," replied Frederick, "he's First Lord of the Admiralty!"—a statement which was received with shouts of incredulous derision.

Although the shadow of war no longer lay upon the land (for the affair in Afghanistan, though serious and deplorable enough, was very

light compared with the mighty conflict into which Britain had so nearly been drawn in the year that was past), the gloom of commercial depression, which had set in with the crash of the City of Glasgow Bank in September, weighed heavily on all classes. Agriculture especially was in a languishing state: the pressure of competition in corn and meat had begun to be formidable about two years previously, and for the first time the effect of one-sided free trade was making itself felt upon our principal industry—in addition to which the harvest of 1878 had been a disastrous one. On the back of all this came news of another frontier war in which Great Britain had become involved, this time in South Africa, with Cetshwayo, King of the Zulus. Not much interest was taken in it by people in this country, absorbed as they were in their private anxieties, until, on February 11, arrived messages describing the terrible calamity at Isandhlwana, where the English column under Colonel Glyn had been cut to pieces.

It was under such circumstances as these that Ministers met Parliament on February 13. The glow of exultation which had followed the return of our Plenipotentiaries from Berlin had given place to cold disapproval and anger at the humiliation of our arms by a tribe of savages.

Notwithstanding all this, the House of Commons still, though with a diminished majority, ratified the conduct of the Government, and rejected a vote of censure (the fifth within twelve months), moved by Sir Charles Dilke, by a majority of 60.

The programme of legislation for the session was not an ambitious one. Much time was taken up discussing new rules of procedure, rendered necessary by the systematic obstruction persisted in by the Irish Nationalist members. Such schemes and discussion of such rules have become familiar of late years in the House of Commons: as each fresh device for paralysing business has been invented, some expedient has had to be found to defeat it. The Mother of Parliaments has too often presented the similitude of a pack of angry schoolboys wasting the hours allowed them for play in squabbling over the rules of the game. On this occasion Mr Joseph Cowen pertinently reminded the Government that they were probably wasting more hours in debating the acceleration of business than they could hope to gain by improved rules of procedure.

The Home Rulers were not slow to turn the circumstances of the day to practical account.

Agricultural distress, low prices, and the ruin of the crops were availed of to foment political discontent, and Parnell lent the full weight of his new authority to the anti-rent agitation.

For Parnell was now leader of the Home Rule party. In the previous session, a debate had taken place on the occasion of the murder of Lord Leitrim, during which the line taken by Messrs Parnell, Biggar, O'Donnell, and Callan, the accusations made and the language used by them, were made the subject of remonstrance and disclaimer by their nominal chief, Mr Butt, who, when he found that he had lost control over his followers, resigned the leadership. Henceforward the policy of Irish Nationalist representatives was to be that of sparing no charge, however odious and unfounded, of respecting no custom or tradition of Parliament, however venerable and honourable, with the intention of making their presence at Westminster intolerable to the House of Commons, and incompatible with its use as a legislative assembly.

During the Whitsuntide recess, it fell to the First Lord of the Admiralty to make an important speech at Bury St Edmunds—important, not because it marked an era in oratory or gave birth to any of those phrases with which it is the

happy knack of some public men to tickle the fancy of the public, but important because of the reassuring effect it had upon the general anxiety which prevailed. The war in Afghanistan had been brought to an end, and a treaty of peace entered into with the Ameer. Sir Garnet Wolseley had been sent out to South Africa in order, as Smith expressed it—

To conduct the war wisely, with moderation, with a proper desire to avoid unnecessary bloodshed, and with the resolution to bring it to a speedy and safe conclusion. We should be wanting in our duty to our country and to Englishmen in other parts of the world if we failed to see that the peace which is to follow should be one which is not to be again disturbed.

Now these were simple expressions, verging, it might be thought, on commonplace: what was it that gave them so much weight? It was that people had learned already to rely on the sound sense, courage, and moderation of the speaker, and this is confirmed by some passages in an article in the Liberal ‘Spectator’ of June 14, 1879, entitled, “A Smith Administration”:—

We read Mr Smith’s unpretentious and straightforward speech with a great deal more pleasure than we had felt in Lord Cranbrook’s. . . . A sense of peace settles down upon one in reading one of the speeches of the First Lord of the Admiralty, a sense of peace to which, when Lord Beaconsfield, or Lord Salisbury, or Lord Cranbrook speaks,

one is quite a stranger. . . . As we hear his judicious sentences, as we hear him say that he and his party want no violent political changes—that what they desire is “practical improvement of our laws,” of a nature to “increase the welfare and prosperity of the country”—we cannot help crying out to ourselves, “Oh for an Administration of such men as these when Conservatives are in the ascendant! . . . Why are we always to be ruled over by the Tory wild cattle, and never by the pacific and moderate, even, if you like to call them so, tame statesmen, who best represent the genuine aspirations of the opulent merchant, the sagacious banker, the benevolent country rector, the cheerful squire, and the bland physician? . . . If the country likes a little political sleep—and at times clearly it does like a little political sleep, for we have always agreed with Mr W. H. Smith that the Conservative working man is by no means a fiction of Conservative brains, but as genuine a fact as the Conservative shopkeeper or the Conservative landowner—why should it not take its rest under a quiet Administration such as Mr Smith, and Ministers like Mr Smith, would give us? What we would fain see for a time—as long as the languid mood lasts in the country—is a Smith Administration, an Administration, that is to say, of men of good sense and good feeling; by profession, modest and elderly; by habit, judicious; by principle, upright; dreading levity and abhorring brag.

. . . Under such an Administration we might have, under the Right Hon. W. H. Smith as First Lord of the Treasury, Lord Winmarleigh (better known as Colonel Wilson Patten) for President of the Council, Sir Hardinge Giffard for Lord Chancellor, the Duke of Northumberland for Foreign Secretary, Earl Beauchamp for Privy Seal, Lord Ravensworth for President of the Board of Trade,

Lord Napier of Magdala for Secretary at War, Mr Algon Egerton for First Lord of the Admiralty, Mr Cross for Home Secretary (on condition he indulged in no more Russophobic panics), Mr Stanhope for Secretary for India, Sir Henry Holland for Secretary for the Colonies, Mr Selater-Booth for President of the Local Government Board, and Sir H. Selwin-Ibbetson for Chancellor of the Exchequer.

It is rather over than under the average proportion of hits to misses in political prophecies that, out of the thirteen posts thus filled up, while Mr Cross and Mr Selater-Booth were already in the offices assigned to them, three others—the first, third, and eleventh—were ultimately occupied by the persons mentioned as fitted for them.

A few days after his speech at Bury St Edmunds, Smith went to Oxford to receive the honorary degree of D.C.L., which the University is wont to confer on men who rise to distinction. Professor Bryce,¹ to whom, as Regius Professor of Civil Law, was assigned the duty of introducing the candidates in a Latin speech, described the First Lord of the Admiralty as one “whose fleets covered the sea and his newspapers the land; one to whom Britain had committed her trident, and one who had succeeded not only in

¹ Now the Right Hon. James Bryce, M.P., Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster.

maintaining the efficiency of the Navy, but in the more difficult task of pleasing the naval world in general." As Smith passed to his seat among the Doctors, the undergraduates struck up the Admiral's song from Gilbert and Sullivan's opera "*Pinafore*." Among the others upon whom the degree was conferred on the same day were the Crown Prince of Sweden, Earl Dufferin,¹ the Bishop of Durham (Dr Lightfoot), the Right Hon. W. E. Forster, and Sir Frederick Leighton, President of the Royal Academy.

During the First Lord's usual annual tour of the dockyards, he gives, in a letter to his eldest daughter, a good description of a memorable ceremony—the laying of the foundation-stone of the new Eddystone Lighthouse:—

DEVONPORT, *August 17, 1879.*

Rain, rain, and more rain! True Devonshire weather, say some, and Lord Mount Edgcumbe, by way of parenthesis, observes, apologetically, "but we do have some really fine weather sometimes: only whenever there is a function it is wet." The night was calm and dark, and we slept quietly. 8 bells struck, and the watch was relieved. No trouble appeared to be impending. Gradually the ship seemed to be waking up. At 6 bells of the 2d watch we were roused from our uneasy slumbers, and at 8 the word was given to get ready, and

¹ Created Marquis of Dufferin and Ava in 1888.

at 1 bell of the 3d watch the ship began to move. B.¹ would say to walk through the water like a thing of life. I say nothing so absurd. It was mizzly and thick, and the tops of the hills were covered; but as we passed out of the harbour under the stern of a German man-of-war training-ship, the officers appeared on deck, and the band played "God save the Queen." They answered, and we did the same until the German band ended its labours, and we had then passed away.

Outside it was dark but not rough. We speedily lost sight of the land, and when we saw it again near the Start a long roll or swell had set in, which interfered with the dignity of your mother's walk, and which consigned poor M. to a camp-stool just abaft the deck-house, where she remained absorbed in contemplation with her face covered with her hands. It rained, and then it lifted again, and then we arrived off the lighthouse, and saw a crowd of steamers, yachts, and small craft.

Presently the *Galatea* telegraphed first Lord and Sir C. Key to land and attend the laying of the stone. The first cutter was lowered, and in we jumped and pulled round to the rock on which the new lighthouse is being built. There were moments when the sea seemed to dispute our right to be there, and the water came right over and drenched the men standing on the wall or coffer-dam built round the foundations.

The two Princes landed and descended into the hole, and then the Duke of Edinburgh, as Master of the Trinity House, taking the trowel and mallet, went through the ceremony usual on such occasions. The Vicar of Plymouth read a short prayer, and at that moment the rain fell with peculiar violence, and washed all our heads. As soon as

¹ His youngest daughter, Beatrice, now the Hon. Mrs A. Acland.

the work was concluded, we crossed over in a boat to the old lighthouse, and climbed up the face of the rock by a ladder to get into it, and from the gallery outside at the top we surveyed the channel and the pleasure craft crowded with umbrellas and mackintoshes. Descending, I wrote my name in the lighthouse-book after the Prince of Wales, and before the Duke of Edinburgh, and I followed the Prince out of the lighthouse tower and down the ladder. The elements appeared especially desirous of showing that he could not control them, and the ladder swung about for a minute or two in a most delightful manner, until at last he was taken or pulled on board in the arms of a sailor.

I lunched with them, and returned in the *Galatea* to the harbour, the rain raining after the Devonshire fashion, and so our work ended; but we three are to dine on board the *Osborne* this evening.

So far as concerned England, peace had been preserved in Europe, and restored in Asia and Africa, by the time the holidays were reached; but the troubles were not at an end, for later in the autumn the call to arms came again. Sir Louis Cavagnari and his escort had been massacred at Cabul. The country was a second time involved in war with Afghanistan.

As is always the case in a Parliament drawing to the close of its natural life, great activity was shown by the Opposition during the recess on platforms throughout the country. The Government had held office for five years and a half; it

was not likely that another twelve months would pass without a dissolution. Among all the busy critics who went from town to town denouncing the "Jingoes," none was more active and merciless than the Marquis of Hartington. But if he was fearlessly outspoken in denouncing the foreign policy of Lord Beaconsfield's Administration, there was one subject on which he spoke equally plainly in unison with the Cabinet—namely, the resistance he was determined should be shown to Irish disaffection. His words on this matter were, indeed, not more forcible than those of other leaders of the Liberal party at the time; but his first public utterance in this connection so clearly formulated the principles which one wing of the Liberal party has since adhered to through good report and bad report, and another has cynically and shamelessly thrown aside, that the passage ought not to be forgotten.

Mr Parnell had, not long before, been glorying in a public meeting on the success of obstruction in Parliament, but added—"we have another way of bringing the Whigs to reason." Referring to these words, Lord Hartington said at Newcastle:—

If he means that we shall be ready to purchase his support, or the support of any section of Parliament, by con-

cessions which we think fatal to the integrity of the empire, I can only repeat now—in the last year of this Parliament what I said in its first session—that I believe that those statesmen who should be so rash and foolish as to offer any concession of this description, would thereby condemn themselves to lasting exclusion from office.

But a more formidable champion of Liberalism than Lord Hartington took the field in November. Mr Gladstone, whose relation to his own party in the House of Commons since his overthrow in 1874 had been of a fitful if not a fretful kind, now renounced all intention of standing again for Greenwich, and undertook to carry the war against the doughtiest Tory in the north, by contesting the seat of the Earl of Dalkeith, eldest son of the Duke of Buccleuch. In that month he set out on the first of those electioneering exploits which have since been known as the Mid-Lothian campaigns.

Though the storms which raged in 1878 and 1879 had subsided, the ground-swell consequent on the disturbance still kept the waters unquiet, and a trifling incident which took place at Constantinople towards the close of the latter year made it seem as if the hurricane was about to gather afresh. One Dr Koller, a German missionary in Constantinople, had published a work in Turkish derogatory of the Mohammedan re-

ligion. For this purpose he had employed a Turkish schoolmaster, Ahmed Tewfik, to translate certain passages from the New Testament and the English Prayer-book. To write anything contrary to the teaching of Mohammed constitutes an offence against the law of the Koran; the schoolmaster was arrested and thrown into prison, and it was understood that he would have to pay the penalty of death. This was a direct breach of the tolerance which the Porte had undertaken to observe towards its subjects; remonstrance was made by the British Ambassador, and the release of Tewfik demanded. But the fanatical party of the Sultan's Cabinet prevailed, and the demand was refused: the result was that Sir H. Layard broke off negotiations with the Porte on 1st January 1880. But even an Ottoman perverseness was not so blind as to lead the Sultan to incur the displeasure of Great Britain, and the matter was compromised by the restoration of Koller's papers and the deportation of Tewfik to the island of Scios, on the plea, probably insincere, that, had he been released in Constantinople, the populace would have torn him in pieces.

Meanwhile Irish sedition was fermenting. The distress caused by failure of the harvest was ex-

tremely serious. The Registrar-General issued a report in which the deficiency of the crops was estimated at £10,000,000 ; the falling off in potatoes alone was set down at £6,000,000. It was a golden opportunity for the political agitator. Mr Parnell went to America to collect funds ostensibly for the relief of distress ; but the true object of his mission—that of filling the coffers of the Land League—might easily be discerned in his speeches. “ If you want to help us,” he said to his American audience, “ help us to destroy the system which produces famine ” — that is, landlordism, the strongest link that binds Ireland to England.

There was afforded to the Government at this time the opportunity of one of those tests of public feeling which reiterated experience has proved to be precarious and misleading. The death of one of the Liberal members for Liverpool on January 16 brought about a by-election in that important constituency. Two candidates were in the field without delay—Lord Ramsay, eldest son of the Earl of Dalhousie, championing the Liberal cause, and Mr Whitley, a local solicitor, standing as a Ministerialist. The contest was watched with the keenest interest throughout the country. Lord Ramsay is said to have damaged his own cause by pledging him-

self to vote for an inquiry into the expediency of Home Rule; but if he thereby alienated some of his own party, he obtained in return the united support of the Irish in Liverpool. The poll was the largest ever recorded in the United Kingdom, showing the prodigious total of 49,991 votes, of which 26,106 were cast for the Conservative, and 23,885 for the Liberal. Thus the Government scored the gain of a seat at the critical moment when Parliament was assembling.

Not less decided was the voice of Southwark, where an election followed immediately after Liverpool. It had been a Liberal seat for forty-eight years, ever since the Reform Act of 1832; and now, when Mr Clarke¹ was returned at the head of the poll by a majority of 835, it seemed indeed as if the flowing tide were with the Government. Sir Stafford Northcote spread his sails once more as leader of the House of Commons under smiling skies and with a favouring gale.

Nevertheless, the strain of anxiety was beginning to tell upon Smith. In times of warlike preparation the pressure, in a great maritime nation like England, falls with special force upon the department of which he was the chief.

¹ Now Sir Edward Clarke, Q.C., M.P.

I sometimes envy [he writes to a friend on January 31] your perfect independence, and I should do so very much more if I had myself forged the chains which bind me to the oar.

The chief subject discussed on the debate on the Address was the distress in Ireland, and the measure prepared by the Government for its relief. It was proposed thereby to advance money on easy terms out of the Irish Church temporalities, through the Irish Commissioners of Public Works, to Boards of Guardians, landowners, and other local authorities, to enable them to employ people suffering from the time of scarcity. This was vehemently opposed by the Home Rulers, who declared that, under colour of relieving distress, the Government were unduly favouring the class of landowners. Mr David Plunket¹ uttered a spirited reproach to the Nationalist party on account of their tactics.

To the Irish agitators [he said] the present distress seems a good occasion to call up the grievances of the past, to rake up buried sorrows, to exasperate the people, and to make them as little as possible ready or patient to endure their sufferings.

He described how he had been with a landlord when he visited a village, and, having inquired carefully into the extent and nature of the dis-

¹ First Commissioner of Works, 1885-1892.

tress of individuals, assured the people that relief was at hand, and would not long be delayed.

As I saw my friend leaving the village I have described, followed by tottering men and women, who held up their children in their arms to him, and blessed and prayed for him, I contrasted him in my mind with the loud-mouthed, swaggering agitator, preceded by a brass band and followed by a Fenian mob, who told the Americans they were not to send home their money in charity to this country, because the governing classes would dispense it—who said they were not to send home this money to the ladies of Ireland, because it would not be applied in charity—who thanked God, in the beginning of this distress, that the rain was coming down in torrents, soaking the turf, rotting the potatoes, and poisoning the food of the people, and thus making the people the more ready tools for him to advance his own movement, and incite them to a bloody resistance.

Smith spoke on the second night of the debate, and entered fully into the difficulties surrounding the problem with which the Government had to deal. He reiterated the view which he had so often expressed in regard to the evil effects of indiscriminate outdoor relief, whether in Ireland or elsewhere.

The Local Government Board was charged by her Majesty's Government to watch the progress of distress most narrowly; but we did not tell every Board of Guardians, or any Board of Guardians, to relax the operations of the poor law until we saw that a real necessity for it

had arisen. . . . The Government have all along felt that any vast system of public works was open to great objection—that it carried with it the impossibility of due supervision and control. Our object has been that relief should be given in the least injurious form to the persons who received it. In the first instance, we desired to stimulate applications from landlords who wished to improve their own property, and who had a care for the people. In the next place, we offered loans to the sanitary authorities and to the presentment sessions, and insisted that the amounts should be returned within a certain period of time. . . . I do not think it necessary or desirable that I should follow my right hon. friend [Mr W. E. Forster] in the remarks he made with reference to the events of last week [the election contest at Liverpool]. We are here in presence of a much more serious matter than anything which can happen to a political party, and I think we can appeal not only to gentlemen opposite, but to the country, to support the Government in the duty which they have to discharge at this time, and that is, to care for those poor people in the manner which will afford relief with the least demoralising effect to those distressed fellow-subjects.

In the debate on the Navy Estimates, Smith was taken to task for not having fulfilled the engagement to lay down a sufficient number of new ships. His answer was, that any shortcoming in that respect had been owing to the necessity, arising from the state of European affairs, to keep the old ones ready to take their place in line of battle.

Things were going smoothly enough to all appearance, when, on March 8, there fell a bolt from the blue. No whisper had leaked out of the surprise in store for both Houses on that day in the announcement which was made, that Parliament was to be dissolved forthwith. Simultaneously there appeared in the newspapers a manifesto by the Prime Minister, in the form of a letter to the Duke of Marlborough, Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, in which, as many thought, he laid exaggerated stress on the gravity of affairs in Ireland. After referring to the improved social condition of that country, the distress prevailing therein, and the measures taken to alleviate it, Lord Beaconsfield went on to say :—

Nevertheless, a danger, in its ultimate results scarcely less disastrous than pestilence and famine, and which now engages your Excellency's anxious attention, distracts that country. A portion of its population is attempting to sever the constitutional tie which unites it to Great Britain in that bond which has favoured the power and prosperity of both.

It is to be hoped that all men of light and leading will resist this destructive doctrine. The strength of this nation depends on the unity of feeling which should pervade the United Kingdom and its widespread dependencies. The first duty of an English Minister should be to consolidate that co-operation which renders a community, educated as our own, in an equal love of liberty

and law. And yet there are some who challenge the expediency of the Imperial character of this realm. Having attempted, and failed, to enfeeble our colonies by their policy of decomposition, they may perhaps now recognise in the disintegration of the United Kingdom a mode which will not only accomplish, but precipitate their purpose.

The immediate dissolution of Parliament will afford an opportunity to the nation to decide upon a course which will materially influence its future fortunes and shape its destiny.

People were disposed to treat these paragraphs as a hysterical reference to the proceedings of a handful of disaffected Nationalists: events have not only justified their serious tone, but, in view of the subsequent course of party politics, have conferred on this letter the dignity of a State document of the first importance. No part of it was more indignantly resented than that which implied the possibility of complicity between the Liberal leaders and the Home Rulers, yet no part of it has proved more thoroughly the penetration of the writer into the motives and characters of Opportunist politicians. The honest incredulity which the Marquis of Hartington hastened to express in the candour of one who could make such a charge, has since been amply vindicated by the manly steadfastness which has guided his action in the Irish

controversy, but it betrayed that, at the time, he was inferior to his opponent in foresight and knowledge of men.

No patriotic purpose [he said] is, in my opinion, gained by the use of exaggeration in describing the Irish agitation for Home Rule. I believe the demand so described to be impracticable. . . . The attempt to arouse national jealousies and reawaken national animosities by descriptions of dangers "worse than pestilence and famine," appears to me to be unnecessary and unwise.

On the eve of battle, while the opposing hosts were scanning each other's position, and Europe was calculating the strength of either army and the chances of victory, one who had been until lately a conspicuous figure in the Conservative camp, and was still, though holding somewhat aloof, reckoned among the Ministerialist forces, went over, with all the influence at his command, and drew up under the colours of the enemy. The Earl of Derby, whose prestige — whose character for deliberate judgment and never-failing caution — carried great weight even among electors under household suffrage, declared himself henceforward a foe to Lord Beaconsfield's Administration. In a letter to the Earl of Sefton he explained the reasons which made him take this course:—

I have been long unwilling to separate from the political connection in which I was brought up, and with

which, notwithstanding occasional differences on non-political questions, I have, in the main, acted for many years; but the present situation of parties, and the avowed policy of the Conservative leader in reference to foreign relations, leave me no choice. I cannot support the present Government; and as neutrality, however from personal feelings I might prefer it, is at a political crisis an evasion of public duty, I have no choice except to declare myself, however reluctantly, ranked among their opponents.

Such a man was far above suspicion of time-serving or self-serving: at an ordinary time the Conservatives would not have been seriously weakened by the secession of one of their leaders, who was unwilling to lead in the direction in which the genius of the party pointed; but coming as it did at a critical moment such as this, it was undoubtedly a heavy blow, and materially affected the result of the elections. It was natural that deep resentment should be felt among Lord Derby's former colleagues at the selection of this particular moment for changing sides, and that it should find vigorous utterance among the ranks of his former followers; but viewed dispassionately, as may be done at this distance of time, no exception can be taken to his action on the score of integrity or sense of duty. In separating himself, as his conscience and intelligence directed him, from the party with whom he had

so long been associated, Lord Derby had the alternative of effacing himself and refraining from exerting any influence on public affairs, or else of uniting his influence to that of the men by whom, as he believed, the country might most safely be governed. Who is there that will not recognise the latter as the more manly and patriotic line of conduct, or hold that, having adopted it, Lord Derby did wrong to choose the moment when his action would have most effect?

This accession of strength sent Mr Gladstone upon his second Mid-Lothian campaign with abundant spirit. "I mean," he exclaimed, rather with the radiant insolence of a youth entering upon the battle of life than with the weary misgiving of the veteran who, six years before, had declared his resolve to spend his remaining years in rest and retirement—

I mean not only to secure the seat for Mid-Lothian, but my object goes so far as to sweep out of their seats a great many other men who now represent constituencies in Parliament, and to consign them to the retirement for which they are more fitted, and of which I hope they will make good use, and by reflection and study make themselves more fitted than they are at present to serve their country.

In his address to the electors of Westminster, Smith confined himself to little more than recit-

ing the chief points in which he claimed the Government, of which he was a member, had earned the confidence of the people. His expressions with regard to their foreign policy brought him into the category of those who had been nicknamed "Jingoes."

One, and not the least important, of the issues submitted to the constituencies of the United Kingdom is whether that policy which has averted war in Europe is to be reversed, and England is to retire into a position of abstention and indifference as to European politics and affairs. I believe such a course would be an abnegation of duty, and disastrous to the political and commercial interests of the country.

Mr Smith and his colleague, Sir Charles Russell, were opposed by Sir Arthur Hobhouse and Mr John Morley.¹ The close of the poll showed Westminster, though staunch to Conservative principles, had felt the influence of the prevailing Liberal reaction, Smith's majority over the highest Liberal candidate having been reduced from 5522, at which it stood in 1874, to 2529. The return stood as follows:—

| | | | |
|-----------------------------|---|---|------|
| Right Hon. W. H. Smith (C.) | . | . | 9093 |
| Sir Charles Russell (C.) | . | . | 8930 |
| Mr John Morley (L.) | . | . | 6564 |
| Sir A. Hobhouse (L.) | . | . | 6448 |

¹ Now the Right Hon. John Morley, M.P., Chief Secretary to the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland.

CHAPTER II.

1880-1881.

POSITION OF PARTIES—CAUSES OF CONSERVATIVE DEFEAT—LORD BEACONSFIELD'S FORECAST—MR GLADSTONE FORMS A CABINET—MR BRADLAUGH AND THE PARLIAMENTARY OATH—IRISH MEASURES—THE FOURTH PARTY—CLOSE OF THE SESSION—AGITATION IN IRELAND—RISE OF BOYCOTTING—CHAIRMANSHIP OF LONDON AND NORTH-WESTERN RAILWAY OFFERED TO AND DECLINED BY SMITH—MEETING OF PARLIAMENT—PEACE PRESERVATION (IRELAND) BILL—RULES OF PROCEDURE—EXPULSION OF IRISH MEMBERS—DEATH OF LORD BEACONSFIELD—REAPPEARANCE OF MR BRADLAUGH—HIS EXPULSION—ARREST OF IRISH MEMBERS, AND SUPPRESSION OF THE LAND LEAGUE—NORTHCOTE ON TARIFF REFORM.

THE abnormal intensity of political feeling aroused by the elections is shown by the number of seats contested in 1880 compared with those in former years. In 1859, at the general election, 101 constituencies were fought; in 1865, 204; in 1868, 277; in 1874, 199; and in 1880, 352, or nearly double the average of the other years.

The success of the Conservative cause in Westminster and the rest of the metropolis awakened

no sympathetic echo in the provinces. From the results of the first few days' polling it was evident that disaster had been lying in wait for the Government.

The state of affairs [wrote Northcote to Smith on April 4] is gloomy enough, and I don't feel at all sure that we have seen the worst even yet. . . . I don't feel cast down. We have been overwhelmed before, and have recovered from it, and there will be plenty of work for us in Opposition. But I am very sorry for the chief. There is much to mortify him in this personal triumph of Gladstone's at what he must feel to be the end of his own political career. He may count, I think, on a reaction in his favour, but he will hardly again take office.

It would be difficult to assign any dominant reason for the wave of Liberalism which swept away so many Conservative seats except the influence which sways vast electoral bodies alternately from one side to the other, and always tells with greater force against the party in power, who have to reckon with all the individuals whom it has been their fate to disappoint or offend, as well as with the neutral residuum with no political bias or principle, save a vague sense of equity instigating them to give "the fellows on the other side a chance," or of mischief prompting them to vote "agin' the Gov'ment."

But besides these ordinary considerations there

were certain other factors in the situation, each of which contributed momentum to the descending grade of the Tories. The secession of the Earls of Derby and Carnarvon from the Cabinet, and the recent adhesion of the former to Mr Gladstone and Lord Hartington, no doubt carried great effect. Then the dissolution had come as a surprise, and people—Englishmen especially—dislike being surprised: they feel that, unless special circumstances justify sudden action, they have a right to be prepared beforehand—to be warned of what is expected of them. They resent being “rushed,” and are suspicious of anything which has the appearance of a practical joke.¹ Undoubtedly the by-elections of Liver-

¹ In the autumn of 1880 Lord Beaconsfield produced his last novel, and there occurs, in a letter to Smith from his frequent correspondent, Mr William Ford, a passage curiously illustrating the jealousy with which many of the middle class regarded such literary exploits:—

“Lord Beaconsfield has, I regret to say, published a novel! just at this time. Brilliant as it is in many respects, it will not increase his literary reputation, but it will vastly impair his political influence with the middle class. He shows too plainly how the wires are pulled by a few men and women. Sober-minded men don’t believe in novel-writing Premiers. As for the Dissenters and other religious sects of the Nonconformist character, they will distrust him more and more. The comparison of his literary labours with those of his great rival marks the distinction the two men hold in the public mind. As a novel, I have greatly enjoyed ‘Endymion’; a professional novelist could not have produced such a work. It bears the impress of the author’s unique experience of the select society of the chosen few, and his fantastic appreciation of them in general;

pool and Southwark had a good deal to do with Lord Beaconsfield's choice of the moment to dissolve: they afforded but one more instance of the utter untrustworthiness of such indications of *popularis aura*.

Next there was the more tangible and measurable element of the Irish vote, which was cast solid against the Ministerialist candidates. The allusion made in his manifesto by Lord Beaconsfield to disaffection in Ireland, however necessary and sagacious, did not prove to be a tactical success. It was met by a counter-manifesto from the Home Rulers, in which Irishmen were called upon, "in presence of the atrocious and criminal manœuvre which has been attempted . . . [to] vote against Benjamin Disraeli as they should vote against the enemy of their country and their race."

Lastly, there was the extraordinary fervour aroused by Mr Gladstone's northern tours. If the Earl of Rosebery was not able literally to fulfil his vaunt of sending up all the Scottish Tory members in a single first-class compartment

but the reader cannot refrain from the disagreeable conclusion that the writer holds the world as a mere plaything for his special amusement and contempt by turns."

There can be no doubt that this was but the expression of a very general feeling towards Lord Beaconsfield in the minds of a substantial portion of the community, and one that had found calamitous utterance at the polls.

of a railway carriage (still less, as somebody suggested, with room to put their feet on the opposite seats), he had not been far amiss in his estimate, for only nine Conservatives were returned from the whole of Scotland. In Ireland the Nationalist party triumphed everywhere except in Ulster. The state of parties in the new House of Commons, as compared with that in the old one, was thus:—

| | Election 1874. | | Election 1880. |
|---|-------------------|---|-------------------|
| Conservatives . . | 351 | Conservatives . . | 243 |
| Liberals | 250 | Liberals | 349 |
| Home Rulers . . | 51 | Home Rulers . . | 60 |
| Conservative majority over Liberals and Home Rulers } 50 | | Liberal majority over Con- servatives and Home Rulers } 46 | |

The elections are all going against us [Smith wrote to his wife on April 2], and it looks as if the Liberals would be as strong as they were in 1868. I hope Cross will keep his seat, but at present the wave—for it is just like a tidal wave—appears to be rising higher and sweeping everything before it.

We know, however, that there is a Ruler, and that the wills of men can be controlled by Him, and I am quite content.

Expressions such as these testify to the earnest view taken by the writer of the principles at stake between the two great parties. No one who regarded a general election merely as a contest between two political sects could thus have

alluded to the Divine control of events without being guilty of irreverence or hypocrisy, and these are the last faults of which Smith can ever have been suspected. With all his tolerance for the opinions of those who differed with him, he looked upon politics, not as a game, but as the exercise of the highest duty men can perform to their country.

On April 8 he wrote again to Mrs Smith :—

. . . I *am* thankful that Cross is in, but you see Egerton is out, and our losses are most severe. However we shall survive them, and find good work to do for the country; and there is great consolation in the hope of seeing more of one's wife and children than has lately been possible. It is yet uncertain when we shall resign. The Queen does not return until Saturday the 17th, but we shall probably have a Cabinet on Tuesday.

In a conversation which Smith had about this time with his chief, Lord Beaconsfield observed that he did not expect the Liberals would do much that year—"they will pass a Burials Bill, not much else. They will have much difficulty in Ireland, the state of which is serious, but they will try to keep them in good humour by refraining from bringing in a Coercion Bill. Then there will be an autumn session, and Lord Hartington [Beaconsfield took for granted that Lord Hartington would be Prime Minister] will come down

and move for a secret committee, as he did before, to inquire into the condition of Ireland, and ask for a strong measure to be passed. Or else they will be driven to pass a bill at once, in which case the Irish party and the extreme Radicals will coalesce and form a strong split. That will be the beginning of the disintegration of parties, and of course it will become the duty of the Conservatives to support the Government in any moderate measure.

"Then," he went on, "there is the County Franchise Bill: that will be brought forward next year when people have cooled. The county members will hate it, for it will cost many of them their seats; but the Tories, instead of negating it, will refuse to pass it until a satisfactory scheme of redistribution has been brought in. The bill will go to the Lords and be thrown out."

"Then there is the Church," remarked Smith.

"Yes," replied Beaconsfield, "they will attack the Church, but not just yet: she is stronger than she was, though of course the disagreement among parties in the Church gives them a handle."

"But," maintained Smith, "the answer to that is that the existence of parties—of difference of opinion within the Church—is in itself evidence

of life and strength. If the Church were dead, there would be no parties."

"Yes," replied Beaconsfield, "that is the answer. No, they won't meddle with the Church just yet. But you—the Opposition—will have much amusement in watching the Government. You will have to be in your places, and keep a bright look-out, but you will require a deal of tact and moderation, and—above all things—let your men keep their tempers. The present position reminds me of 1832, when Lord Grey came into power and there was really no Tory party,—it was smashed—had ceased to exist; there were about 170 of them against 400 of the others. Well, immediately the Liberals began to cabal against their leaders; in a few years Lord Grey was gone, and Lord Melbourne—without a majority of his own—kept in office by means of the Irish vote, and that broke up the Whig party for ever. Then, if only Sir Robert Peel had known how to manage men, the other side would never have come into power again; but he let the moment slip, and the opportunity never will return again."

The forecasts hazarded in this conversation (of which ample notes were made at the time) did not in every respect prove to be accurate in chronology, though the estimate was fulfilled

almost exactly after Beaconsfield had passed away.

During this year Mr J. L. Pattisson first came to Mr Smith as his private secretary. It will be remembered that the two gentlemen became acquainted when the latter was travelling in Canada in 1872, and the former was secretary to the Earl of Dufferin. On the first day Mr Pattisson was on duty, Smith introduced him to several of his friends in the lobby of the House of Commons, among others to Sir Thomas Bateson, M.P.,¹ who remarked aside to the new private secretary—"You are going to the truest gentleman I know." Those who remember Sir Thomas and the rigid meaning he attached to the term "gentleman," will appreciate this testimony to Smith's character. Mr Pattisson remained with Smith until his death, and no public man was ever better served by a confidential lieutenant.

As soon as the result of the polls was known, it became a matter of keen speculation who should succeed Lord Beaconsfield as Prime Minister. The choice lay between Earl Granville, the Marquis of Hartington, and Mr Gladstone. On Lord Hartington had fallen the chief weight of opposition, though without Mr Gladstone's crusades the end might have come in a different

¹ Created Baron Deramore in 1885.

way. On April 22 the Queen sent for Lord Hartington; next day he and Lord Granville had an interview with her Majesty, who thereupon put an end to all doubts by sending for Mr Gladstone. Lord Hartington became Secretary of State for War, and Lord Granville took the seals of the Foreign Office. Mr Forster was to go to the Irish Office as Chief Secretary, and one day, just before his appointment was announced, he happened to overtake Smith, who was walking with his daughter in Pall Mall. The ex-First Lord of the Admiralty offered his congratulations to the new Minister, and added: "I remember six years ago you told me you were very glad to leave office, and that after six years a man is ready and glad to go back again." "Yes," replied Forster, rather sadly, "that is quite true, and it was a true thing said by some one, that a man has two happy days in his official life,—the first when he takes office—the second, when he leaves it." "I hear you are going to Ireland," said Smith; "you will have a nice house in the Phoenix Park." But Forster made no answer except a shrug of his heavy shoulders, and passed on.

It was under the depressing conditions of staggering defeat that the Conservative party in both Houses of Parliament were summoned

into council at Bridgewater House. The scene must remain impressed on the memory of many who were present on this occasion. Never was there a warmer feeling of devotion felt for a chief than thrilled the members of the party in this hour of overwhelming disaster, and never did he rise more effectively to a trying occasion. It so happened that as Lord Beaconsfield stood addressing the meeting with his late Cabinet seated round him, he was placed immediately under a large picture by Murillo of the Madonna. The colouring both of painted effigy and living figure was of the same tone; the sallow flesh tints, black hair, and clothing were almost identical in both. One could almost imagine that the Virgin was spreading her hands in compassion over the fallen leader. Disaffected Tories laid aside their grievances and rallied to their old chief: the Earl of Carnarvon and Sir Robert Peel, erst recalcitrant, spoke heartily and well; only the Earl of Derby was absent, and he had joined hands with the adversary.

On the very threshold of their undertaking, Ministers were confronted with a problem of extreme delicacy and complexity, and one destined to give birth to prolonged and angry controversy. Mr Charles Bradlaugh, who had been returned as one of the members for Northampton,

Equal

was well known (to use his own expression) as a "propagandist of atheism," an advocate of systematic Malthusianism, and the author of a work which the courts subsequently declared to be immoral and ordered its suppression. Once a soldier in the Dragoon Guards, Bradlaugh had, since leaving the service, supported himself by delivering infidel and Radical lectures and by a fluent pen. This was the individual who on April 29, when the new Parliament was being sworn in, presented himself at the table and claimed to be allowed to affirm, instead of taking the oath. Objection having been taken to this, a Select Committee was appointed to inquire into the matter, and, by a majority of one vote, decided against Bradlaugh's claim. Upon this Bradlaugh declared that he was prepared to take the oath, and if, in order to discharge his duty to his constituents, he had to submit to a form less solemn in his eyes than affirmation, so much the worse for those who forced him to repeat words which, he declared, were for him mere sounds, conveying no clear and definite meaning, and without any binding effect on his conscience.

By this admission, in which he was probably perfectly sincere, Bradlaugh delivered himself into the hands of his enemies, for, on his presenting himself a second time and claiming to take

the oath, Sir Henry Drummond Wolff interposed, and argued that, inasmuch as Bradlaugh had declared that the terms of the oath were, in his opinion, an empty form, that declaration, which would be sufficient to prevent his sworn evidence being taken in any court of law, ought also to debar him from swearing in the Court of Parliament.

To get rid of the dilemma, the Prime Minister moved the appointment of a second Committee, who found that Bradlaugh could not legally take the oath, but ought to be allowed to affirm at his own risk. On the report of the Committee, Mr Labouchere, Bradlaugh's colleague in the representation of Northampton, moved that affirmation be permitted, to which Sir Hardinge Giffard moved an amendment that Bradlaugh be neither permitted to affirm nor to swear. The debate was heated and painful. Mr Bright, strongly advocating Bradlaugh's cause, declared that "the working people of this country cared as little for the dogmas of Christianity as the upper classes did for the practice of that religion." On a division Sir H. Giffard's amendment was carried by 275 votes to 230. /

Thereupon ensued a scene of the wildest excitement. Bradlaugh, a man of commanding stature and majestic mien, strode to the table of the

House and claimed to take the oath. Being ordered by the Speaker to withdraw, he said—

“With great respect, sir, I refuse to obey the orders of the House, which are against the law.”

Then, on Sir Stafford Northcote’s motion (for the leader of the House declined all responsibility in the matter), Bradlaugh was taken into custody by the Serjeant-at-Arms. He remained that night in confinement in the Clock Tower, but the following day was released by order of the House, on Sir Stafford Northcote’s motion. The question was decided, for that session at all events, by a resolution passed on July 1, permitting all persons whom the law allowed to make affirmation instead of oath to do so on taking their seats, subject to any liability by statute.¹

¹ A curious illustration of Bradlaugh’s testimony to the value of an oath as binding the consciences of ordinary witnesses came under my own observation in 1888. I was chairman of a Select Committee in that year, of which Mr Bradlaugh was a member. During our first or second sitting some startling evidence was given, implying serious charges against certain persons in the discharge of fiduciary duties. Mr Bradlaugh interrupted the proceedings, saying: “Mr Chairman, I move that the room be cleared.” This having been done, he moved that, having regard to the gravity of the evidence we had heard, all subsequent witnesses should be put upon oath: which was agreed to and carried into effect. Having had occasion above to refer to the painful circumstances of Mr Bradlaugh’s entrance into Parliament, I take this opportunity of observing that, in spite of the detestation in which his opinions were held by the majority of the House of Commons, he lived to secure general esteem for his inflexible honesty, as well as for his industry and ability in business.

The whole of July was taken up with discussions on the Compensation for Disturbance Bill, to prevent the eviction of Irish tenants without compensation, even when they had ceased to pay any rent. This measure was thrown out by the Lords by a majority of more than 5 to 1, and a similar course would have been taken in regard to the Ground Game Bill, had not Lord Beaconsfield implored the Peers not to court collision with the other House, except where vital principles or matters of first importance, such as the government of Ireland or reform of the land laws, were concerned.

We have [wrote Smith to Mr Ford], I think, persuaded the Lords to pass both the Employers and the Hares and Rabbits Bills. . . . I do not myself like the look of English politics. The transfer of rights and property from a minority to a majority threatens to become popular, and there is danger that one set of politicians will endeavour to outbid the other in the effort to gain the popular voice.

The Conservative Opposition was generally in a limp and disorganised condition throughout this session; but a small body of independent members below the gangway distinguished themselves by the intrepidity and persistency of their resistance to the Government, so as to earn for themselves the title of the Fourth Party. These, as is well known, consisted of Lord Randolph

Churchill as leader, Mr Arthur Balfour, Sir John Gorst, and Sir Henry Drummond Wolff. The apparent passivity of the occupants of the Tory front bench drew upon them — especially upon Northcote, Cross, and Smith — some stinging taunts from this knot of free-lances; taunts which, so far as Smith was concerned, were not deserved, for if it be admitted that Northcote, habitually gentle and forbearing, was sometimes slow to take advantage of opportunity, it often fell to Smith to stimulate him to more vigorous action.

But very often during this session the Tories had to fight shoulder to shoulder with their historic foes against the Irish. For instance, on August 28, Smith wrote home:—

We have had a curious life to-day. It has been two days in one, or one day prolonged into another. I went home last night shortly after one, knowing that the Irish were going to keep it up all night; and at half-past six they sent for me to say that the House was still sitting, and would I come down? So I got up and had my breakfast, and went down and sat in the House until half-past eleven, when I went to a meeting at Seamore Place to see the Peers. They talked for two hours, and on my return to the House I found the Thursday sitting had been ended, and we had got into Friday. The poor Ministers look fearfully fagged, and they will have a bad night again, but it is very much their own fault, as they never lose an opportunity of truckling to the rebels.

When at last the session was brought wearily to a close on September 7, the seat of war was transferred to Ireland, and it becomes necessary, in order to follow the course of the politics of those days, to take note of the origin of a system for which a special term had to be devised. Parnell, speaking at Ennis, exclaimed, "What is to be done with a tenant bidding for a farm from which another tenant has been evicted?" "Shoot him!" cried somebody in the audience. "No," replied Parnell, "I do not say shoot him; there is a more Christian and charitable way of dealing with him; let him be shunned in the street, in the shop, in the market-place—even in the places of worship—as if he were a leper of old."

The first notable example of the execution of this cruel advice took place at Lough Mask, where Captain Boycott, the Earl of Erne's agent, had a large farm. He had earned the displeasure of the Land League, and they issued orders that he should be treated "as a leper of old." In consequence all his men left him just as the crops were ready for the sickle; tradesmen refused to supply goods; even the postman was warned not to carry his letters. But Captain Boycott was not the man to sit down under what many a poor tenant had had to suffer in silence. He appealed for succour, nor did he appeal in vain;

funds were collected, and a hundred stout fellows set out from Ulster to do the necessary work of the farm. The Government were on the alert; no fewer than 7000 cavalry, infantry, and police, with two field-pieces, were employed to protect the Ulstermen in their operations, and Captain Boycott's crops were saved, under circumstances closely resembling civil war. The affair made such an impression that henceforth the English language was permanently enriched by the terms "boycotting" and "to boycott."

The murder of Lord Mountmorres on September 25 was another landmark in what was to prove a long and bloody era of crime. Murder, maiming of men and beasts, moonlighting, and boycotting were practised almost with impunity; juries were afraid to convict, witnesses terrified into silence: as a cotemporary rhymester rendered it—

"The difference 'twixt 'moonlight' and moonshine
The people now well understand:
The first is the law of the Land League,
The other—the law of the land."

The Government, recognising the hopelessness of ruling Ireland under the ordinary law, resolved on the prosecution of the Land League, and the introduction of special legislation to restore order.

In January 1881, Smith received a proposal which testified to the esteem in which his business capacity was held by those best able to form a judgment thereon. The largest railway company in Great Britain, and therefore the largest in the world, invited him to become their chairman.

I had the offer of the chairmanship of the London and North-Western Railway made formally to me yesterday. It is the unanimous wish of the Board that I should come to preside over them, and they say they would do everything in their power to lighten my labours if I would consent. They begged me to take time and not to answer off-hand, and so I said I would give my answer on Monday.

He did so, in the negative, after consulting Lord Beaconsfield, who said to him: "Politics is a jealous mistress; hitherto you have been singularly successful; it falls to the lot of few men to be six years consecutively in office, and during half that time in such a high and important office as First Lord of the Admiralty."

Parliament was summoned to meet earlier than usual this year, owing to the gravity of the situation in Ireland; and in order to be at his post at the commencement of business, Smith had to hasten back through some extraordinarily heavy weather from Beyrout, where he was

cruising in the Pandora. The special business of Parliament was marked out in the Queen's Speech :—

The anticipation with which I last addressed you, of a great diminution of the distress in Ireland, owing to an abundant harvest, was realised; but I grieve to state that the social condition of the country has assumed an alarming character. Agrarian crimes in general have multiplied far beyond the experience of recent years. Attempts upon life have not grown in the same proportion as other offences, but I must add that efforts have been made for personal protection, far beyond all former precedent, by the police, under the direction of the Executive.

The Speech went on to advert to the frustration of justice, owing to intimidation of witnesses and juries :—

An extended system of terror has been established in various parts of the country, which has paralysed almost alike the exercise of private rights and the performance of civil duties.

This formed the justification of a new Coercion Bill for Ireland, of which Mr Forster gave notice on the first night of the session—adequate, stringent, and lacking only one element of efficiency, that it was limited to four years' duration. Forster hated having to bring in such a measure : the probable necessity for it had been weighing on his mind when he spoke so gloomily to Smith

at the beginning of the Administration ; and now that the attempt to govern Ireland without extraordinary powers had ended in bloody failure, he relished his task none the more because he could not evade it :—

This has been to me a most painful duty : I never expected that I should have to discharge it. If I had thought that this duty would devolve on the Irish Secretary, I would never have held the office ; if I could have foreseen that this would be the result of twenty years of parliamentary life, I would have left Parliament rather than undertake it. But I never was more clear than I am now that it is my duty : I never was more clear that the man responsible, as I am, for the administration of the government of Ireland, ought no longer to have any part or share in a Government that does not fulfil its first duty—the protection of person and property and the security of liberty.

The scenes of disorder and rampant obstruction to which the discussion of Forster's bill gave rise were utterly beyond anything recorded in the proceedings of the House of Commons, and proved that the amended Rules of Procedure were as useless in controlling licence of speech as—to use a Scottish proverb—a boiled carrot would be to bar a door. A sitting of twenty-two hours' duration was followed by one of forty-one hours, and the latter was only brought to a close by the Speaker taking the extreme course, which noth-

ing but desperate circumstances could be held to warrant, of refusing to call upon any more members to speak. He justified his action in the following words :—

Further measures for ensuring orderly debate I must leave to the judgment of the House, but I may add that it will be necessary for the House itself to assume more effectual parliamentary control over its debates, or to invest greater authority in the Chair.

It was a memorable occasion in the history of Parliament; and as Smith's daily life was at this time and henceforward inseparable from affairs in the House of Commons, it is necessary to allude to the chief incidents in what followed upon these events. Precedents, ancient indeed, but ample, were exhumed to justify the Speaker's action, which was sharply called in question as an interference with liberty of speech. It was shown how, on April 14, 1614, the Court party in Parliament having obstructed a bill directed against the abuses of purveyors, Sir H. Jenkins was called upon by the Speaker, Sir E. Phelip, to desist, and the Journals of the House record that "to prevent the idle expense of time," "if any man speak impertinently or beside the question in hand, it standeth with the Order of the House for Mr Speaker to interrupt him, and to know the pleasure of the House whether they

will further hear him." On April 17 the Order was passed, "that if any superfluous motion or tedious speeches be offered to the House, the party is to be directed and ordered by Mr Speaker." On May 9 following, "Sir Roland Litton offering to speak, it grew to a question whether he should speak any more in the matter, and overruled that he ought not."

A meeting of the Conservative party was held at Lord Beaconsfield's new house in Curzon Street, to consider the Prime Minister's proposals to put down obstruction. It was a scene very different from that of the last occasion when Beaconsfield had addressed his followers. Instead of the vast saloon at Bridgewater House, the sober colouring of the walls and the mellowed gilding of the picture frames, there was the newly upholstered drawing-room, tricked out with blue and gold, and gaudily carpeted. Beaconsfield stood upon a high stool placed at the angle between the front and back rooms—a lean, dark, feeble figure, against a tinselly background. It was thus that the rank and file of the Conservative party—in great measure his own creation—were to look upon Benjamin Disraeli for the last time. Few of those present ever saw him again.

On the very day when Mr Gladstone's motion on Procedure was down for discussion—February

3—a fresh object-lesson was forthcoming of how little modern men were to be restrained by ancient rules or traditions. The Home Secretary, Sir William Harcourt, in answer to a question, announced the arrest of Michael Davitt, a prominent Land Leaguer. Mr Gladstone rose to move his resolution, and at the same moment Mr John Dillon sprang to his feet. The Speaker calling on Mr Gladstone, Mr Dillon cried out, “I demand my privilege of speech.”

There followed a scene of great confusion. Mr Dillon stood erect, with arms folded, pale and determined. “Name him ! name him !” shouted members on both sides.

Then was solved a question which a former Speaker of the House once declared himself unable to answer. “What would happen,” he was asked, “if a member persisted in disregarding the ruling of the Chair?” “It would be the duty of the Speaker to name that member,” was the reply. “And what would happen next?” “Heaven only knows !” was all the answer the Speaker could give.

What happened on this occasion was that the Speaker “named” Mr John Dillon. The Prime Minister then moved that Mr Dillon be suspended from the service of the House, which having been put and carried on a division, the

offender was directed to withdraw. This he refused to do, whereupon the Speaker ordered the Serjeant-at-Arms to remove him. The Serjeant, Captain Gossett, walked to where Mr Dillon sat immovable, and touched him on the shoulder. Still Mr Dillon sat motionless; and the Serjeant, turning towards the door, beckoned to his assistants, five of whom obeyed his summons. It looked as if the House was to be scandalised by a scene of physical force; but just as this seemed inevitable, Mr Dillon rose, and, after bowing to the Chair, left the chamber in company with the Serjeant-at-Arms. But the end was not yet. Thirty-six Irish members proceeded, one after another, to defy the Speaker's authority, and each in turn had to be suspended on the motion of the Prime Minister. It was a painful and humiliating scene, showing, as it did, how defective the best considered devices of human government prove if there arises the determination of a minority to defeat them. After the ejection of the Irish members, the House agreed to the rule of Urgency of Debate proposed by its leader.¹

¹ They were not without their gleams of mirth, these interminable Irish debates, and Smith, though he rarely originated a joke, thoroughly appreciated such as came in his way. Sir Patrick O'Brien was a never-failing post-prandial fountain of fun, and the House knew what to expect whenever, in the 1880-85 Par-

On April 19 the Earl of Beaconsfield breathed his last, and in him the Conservative party lost a sagacious leader at a time when they could ill afford to part with the only personage who could be matched with Mr Gladstone. Two days later Smith wrote to his wife:—

Lord Beaconsfield will be buried at Hughenden on Tuesday morning, and we shall all go down to his burial. I have seen him for the last time, and he looked better in death than in life, but there was a sort of evidence of struggle on his face which had ended. Northcote had

liament, he rose with old-fashioned grace and flashing eye. Sir Patrick was a Home Ruler, but a Buttite, and sat behind the Liberal Government, whereas the Parnellites, to whom he showed more bitterness than to the Tories, always sat in opposition below the gangway. The member for Clare having aroused his wrath on one occasion, Sir Patrick was moved to administer a castigation, in the course of which he alluded in scathing tones to "that young sea-serpent from County Clare." This brought the Speaker to his feet, who rebuked the hon. baronet for using unparliamentary expressions to describe the conduct of another member; upon which Sir Patrick, with inimitable dignity, replied—"Of course, sir, I bow to your ruling at once, and I beg leave to withdraw the sea-serpent."

As a zoological illustration this was, perhaps, only rivalled by one used by another Irish member in the 1886-92 Parliament, who accused the Home Secretary (Mr Matthews) of "for ever starting fresh hares to draw red herrings across the scent."

Again, there was a plethora of pathos in a sentence of another member's speech—"The cup of Ireland's wrongs has been overflowing for years, but it is nearly full now."

One of the Ulster members also perpetrated an enjoyable bull when, in opposing Mr Balfour's Irish University Bill, he declared that "the right hon. gentleman is trying to thrust this bill down our throats behind our backs!"

been obliged to go to Hatfield, but I think it is arranged that I shall not speak on Monday. I must, however, come up, as most of my friends will be in town, and consultation is necessary. Already men are asking who is to be the future Chief, and I am afraid that question will have to be settled.

The question was settled by the appointment of a duumvirate—Lord Salisbury becoming leader of the Peers, as Northcote already was of the Commons.

The Irish Land Bill of the Government occupied most of the session till August; by it “the three F’s” demanded by the Land League—namely, fair rents, free sale, and fixity of tenure (which Northcote declared were equivalent to three other F’s—fraud, force, and folly)—were practically established. Here is a trifling memento of the long discussions to which this measure gave rise—a note flung across the table of the House by Smith to Mr Gladstone, and returned with the reply initialed. (See facsimile.)

But before the House could be prorogued, it was to be the scene of violent disorder once more. Bradlaugh came again into prominence. An action had been brought against him, under the Parliamentary Oaths Act of 1866, for having sat and voted without taking the oath, the pen-



Can you tell me yet
whether the discussion
on the money clauses is
to be taken now - on
Clause 27. or whether it
will be postponed

WHS

If you wish we can go on
with the Clause in its order:
if not I am inclined to postpone.
I shall take leave presently.

July 12. 81

alty being £500 on each division. This, by the beginning of the session, had already mounted up to a total of £45,000. Judgment went against him in successive Courts, and the proceedings in the House thereupon ended in his ejection by main force. Being a man of powerful frame, he struggled desperately with the assistants of the Serjeant-at-Arms, and, followed by an excited crowd of members, was deposited at the foot of the Members' staircase, with torn clothes and dishevelled hair.

After the rising of Parliament, Mr Forster carried into vigorous effect the new powers with which he had been armed. Messrs Parnell, Sexton, Dillon, and O'Kelly, Members of Parliament, were, with other officials of the Land League, arrested and confined in Kilmainham Prison, and the League itself was proclaimed as an unlawful association.

In September of this year an anonymous paper entitled "Tariff Reform" appeared in 'Blackwood's Magazine.' It raised questions which some of the later effects of free trade were pressing on the attention of many British producers, and advocated a policy of reciprocal commerce which its opponents denounced as indistinguishable from protection. The writer of this article was pretty generally known to be Lord John

Manners, whose views on this subject were not shared by Northcote and Smith, as may be seen from the following gentle protest:—

Private.

PYNES, EXETER, *Sept.* 27, 1881.

MY DEAR SMITH,—You left these papers behind.

I have just finished the Blackwood article. It is neatly written, and is rather plausible; but I agree with you that the scheme is impracticable. At the same time, it increases my difficulty in speaking out. It is embarrassing when a colleague makes such proposals as these. The authorship of the article is likely soon to be guessed; and if I condemn his plan *in limine* and within a day or two of its publication, it will look like a split, which of all things I wish to avoid. I must contrive to group this with other proposals, all of which may be well examined, though I shall indicate some of the difficulties which will probably be found in the course of the examination.

I am much the better in mind for your visit, and the opportunity it has given me of talking over the whole matter.—Ever yours,

S. H. N.

CHAPTER III.

1882-1884.

IRISH LEGISLATION—THE RULES OF PROCEDURE—ELECTION FOR WESTMINSTER — REAPPEARANCE OF MR BRADLAUGH—SMITH VISITS IRELAND AND INQUIRES INTO THE LAND QUESTION — RESIGNATION OF EARL COWPER AND MR FORSTER— ASSASSINATION OF LORD F. CAVENDISH AND MR BURKE— ARREARS OF RENT BILL—WATCHFULNESS OF THE POLICE— THE FOURTH PARTY — ILLNESS OF MR GLADSTONE — MR FORSTER ATTACKS THE LAND LEAGUE—AGRICULTURAL HOLDINGS BILL—SMITH'S SPEECHES IN THE COUNTRY—MEETING OF PARLIAMENT—MR BRADLAUGH ONCE MORE—HOUSEHOLD FRANCHISE BILL — AUTUMN SESSION — SMITH AND THE NATIONAL DEFENCES.

THE condition of things in Ireland, when Parliament reassembled on February 7, 1882, had gone from bad to worse, and the Government had to ask for fresh powers to deal with it. By way of counterpoise to their new Coercion Bill, they introduced at the same time an Arrears of Rent Bill, providing for the suspension of proceedings against defaulting tenants and the wiping out or

reduction of arrears. These two measures were pressed forward *pari passu*, and occupied the greater part of the session. Mr Gladstone, before the meeting of Parliament, had declared that further reform of the Rules of Procedure was of paramount necessity, and on January 30 Smith announced that he and his colleagues would consent to any reasonable changes in the rules, but objected to closure by a bare majority.

Smith's colleague in the representation of Westminster, Sir Charles Russell, was obliged to resign his seat at this time owing to ill health, and the Conservative party in the borough unanimously selected Lord Algernon Percy, second son of the Duke of Northumberland, as their candidate. The nomination took place on February 10, and, for the first time in its history, Westminster elected a Conservative without opposition—remarkable evidence of the powerful influence which Smith had established upon its political character. It was the general belief that the electors would have accepted any candidate whom their senior member had chosen to suggest.

Before it was possible to begin the business of legislation, the House of Commons was involved in yet another altercation with Mr Bradlaugh,

who presented himself to be sworn. Sir St. ford Northcote opposed his admission, on the ground that the circumstances had in nowise altered since the resolution of the House on April 26, 1881. The Government advocated that Bradlaugh should be permitted to swear on his own responsibility; but on a division they were beaten by 286 to 228.

On February 21 Mr Labouchere challenged the Opposition to declare the seat for Northampton to be vacant, and moved the issue of the writ for a new election. This motion having been rejected, up came Mr Bradlaugh to the table, pulled a Testament out of his pocket, and administered the oath to himself. Once more it became the strange duty of Northcote, gentlest of human beings, to move the expulsion of Bradlaugh for contempt and contumacy, which, this time, was effected without physical force.

Smith, who had spent ten days in the autumn of 1881 in cruising round the Irish coast, landing at various places, and by personal observation satisfying himself as to the condition of the people, now returned to Ireland in order to push further an independent inquiry into the land question, having in view a plan of land purchase with money advanced to the tenants by the State.

rec¹

MARINE HOTEL, KINGSTOWN,

April 6, 1882.

I have had an interesting day, commencing from last evening, when Colonel Bruce, the deputy chief of the Constabulary, and Mr Lefarrin, of the Office of Works, dined with us. They told me a great deal about the country, which was very interesting to me. This morning Herbert Murray came to breakfast at 9, and as I went into Dublin, Gibson¹ picked up four or five men with whom I had a hard talk for an hour and a half on land rent-charges, mortgages, conveyances, and other subjects of great interest to me, but I fear unintelligible to you. From them Gibson carried me off to Trinity College, and I inspected the library with the help of Dr Ingram, the librarian, and we then lunched with the Provost, Dr Jellett, who is a very interesting old man; and after that I was handed over to a Mr Atkinson, who came out with me to Kingstown in order to "talk." I am now writing my letters in this very pleasant club, of which I am made free for a fortnight; and presently I am to go to the hotel to dress for dinner, and go into Dublin to dine with Mr Holmes.² . . .

It is amusing that so many people are coming over here. Plunket is here now, and I met Dunbar Barton³ in the club; Lord Richard Grosvenor came over on Tuesday night, and Frederick Cavendish is coming next week, and of the other members of the Government, I hear Lord Carlingford and Lord Hartington are both to be here immediately.

¹ Created Baron Ashbourne, 1885.

² Afterwards Attorney-General for Ireland, and now one of the Judges of the Queen's Bench in Ireland.

³ Now Q.C., and M.P. for Mid-Armagh.

KINGSTOWN, *April 8.*

You would have thought of me to-day if you had known where I was. Mr Barlow Smythe, whose sister-in-law was killed the other day, is a friend of Mr Gibson's, and he wanted to see him; so we went down together to Mullingar by the 9 o'clock train, and drove out in an open car to Barbavilla, over the very road where the outrage occurred. I saw Mr Smythe, and was much interested with what he told us. It is hardly possible to imagine a more indulgent landlord, or a more religious man; but he is deeply moved by the ingratitude of his tenants, almost all of whom have shown utter indifference to the wicked murder, or to the fact that it was intended to kill him. The people are sullen, and during the entire drive out and back there was not a single salute of any kind—a smile or a salutation from any one of them. We were in no danger, as we were strangers; but we were offered an armed constable to go up with us if we had wished it. There is no doubt it was the act of Ribbonmen; but they have no evidence at present to fix any one with the crime, although many people must know who did it.

To-night we dine with the Lord Chief-Justice Morris. Mr Dunbar Barton is to be there, Plunket also, and King-Harman.

ROYAL S. GEORGE'S YACHT CLUB,
KINGSTOWN, *April 9.*

Poor Forster! I wrote to him saying I thought it better I should not call on him, as everything would be known and get into the papers, and be misrepresented. You see he agrees with me, but I thought it only right to tell him that I was not deficient in regard for the Chief Secretary. He has very serious and difficult work, and not of a kind to suit his temperament; but I am very thankful I have no such responsibility. I have had a

very quiet Sunday, and as pleasant a one as I could have away from you and from home. I could not help thinking of you all with great thankfulness. I almost tremble when I think of the blessings we enjoy, and my eyes filled this morning when I read the good accounts all round which F.'s¹ masters give of him.

April 10.

. . . I am getting a great deal of kindness and attention. Last night we dined quietly with Lord and Lady Ardilaun, and to-day I lunched with Ed. Guinness,² people being asked to meet me who could give information. I have seen half the judges, and two of them, possessing special knowledge, have promised me memoranda to assist me, so that it will not be for want of goodwill that I shall fail. To-morrow early the chairman of the Midland Railway is going to take me down in a special train to see the poorest parts of the country. It will be a long day, and I cannot get back before the boat starts with the night mail. . . . People are waiting to talk to me. I am almost getting tired of it.

April 11.

I am starting off at 6.30 A.M. for a run of 200 miles in the west to see poverty and wretchedness, and I shall not be back until 10.30 at night. I must therefore write now, or you will not hear from me before my arrival. . . . A week's separation is a long one, and especially at this season; but I think it was right, and I have learned a great deal in a short time. The days have been very full, so full that it has been quite impossible to make notes of all I have heard and seen; but it has done me good.

¹ His son Frederick.

² Created Baron Iveagh, 1892.

The impression left on Smith's mind as the result of this visit of inquiry was so strongly in favour of the establishment of a peasant proprietary in Ireland, as the only means of allaying chronic agrarian and consequent political disturbance, that he undoubtedly brought a strong influence to bear upon his colleagues in determining their future land legislation for Ireland, as contained in Lord Ashbourne's Land Purchase Act and subsequent measures. But inasmuch as this impression was borne in upon him in spite of his aversion to interference with the ordinary laws of free contract and of supply and demand, it is well to put on record the grounds on which he formed his opinion. There will be found in the Appendix a memorandum on the land question in Ireland, drawn up at Smith's request by the late Judge Longfield,¹ and conveying a luminous expression of views which commended themselves to Smith's judgment, and had much influence in his subsequent action on this vexed subject.

Immediately on his return to London he gave notice of a Resolution in favour of a large measure of land purchase by the State, but the terrible events which shortly after occurred in Ireland

¹ The Right Hon. Montiford Longfield, Chief Judge of the Irish Landed Estates Court, and Regius Professor of Feudal and English Law.

forced him to give up the idea for that session. Northcote refers to it on April 17 :—

When can you and I and Gibson have a quiet talk over the Irish question, and especially over the details of your motion? It is very important that we should be prepared, and I confess to sad unpreparedness at present. . . . We must, of course, have a Shadow Cabinet before you actually come on; but I should like to have a general acquaintance with the case before we come to that.

The session had not endured three months before dissensions arose in the Cabinet as to the policy to be pursued in Ireland. The protracted incarceration of Parnell, Dillon, and O'Kelly, not on any proven charge, but as "suspects," was matter of great disquiet to the Government. Ministers who had come into power loudly denouncing the coercion employed by their predecessors, found themselves enforcing a law many degrees more stringent than that which had been allowed to lapse. The irony of the situation was intolerable, and the conciliatory measure dealing with arrears of rent did not promise to mend matters. Things came to a crisis on May 2, when the startling announcement was made that the Lord Lieutenant and his Chief Secretary had resigned, and that the members imprisoned in Kilmainham were to be released. Lord Cowper and Mr Forster made statements in their re-

spective Houses, leaving no ambiguity about the cause of their resignation. Mr Forster's speech, delivered in his peculiar rugged, almost awkward, style, was impressive in the highest degree, not only from the matter of it, but on account of his reputation for honesty and courage. None who heard him could fail to mark the deep emotion under which he laboured, or realise the sharpness of the trial which he underwent before separating from his colleagues. He was known to be merciful and averse from severity; the very nickname which he had earned from the Irish — "Buckshot Forster" — arose out of an order which he had given that the Constabulary, when it was necessary to fire on disorderly mobs, should use buckshot instead of ball-cartridge. His explanation was listened to with painful attention, and at some moments he seemed as if he were about to break down.

✓ My right hon. friend the Prime Minister a day or two ago rightly stated the reason of my resignation—namely, that I did not think it right to undertake the responsibility of the release of the three members of Parliament who were detained under the provisions of the Protection Act. I trust the House will believe me when I say that if I could think it right not only that those three gentlemen should have been released, but that other persons detained under the Act should be also released, I should only have been too glad to have

ordered their release. No one who has not realised the odious position which any Minister is placed in who has to carry out the provisions of an Act involving the suspension of the Habeas Corpus can have any idea how odious it is for a man to be made, as it were, the jailer of his fellow-subjects, the duration of whose imprisonment and, in some measure, the treatment of whom depend upon his responsibility. Considering these circumstances, and the fact that it is necessarily his own opinion rather than the law which must be considered in the matter, it is so odious a position that I cannot imagine that any Chief Secretary would not have been glad beyond measure to have felt that he could rightly advise his colleagues to release the prisoners. I have tried to work the Protection Act according to the assurance that I gave that we only detained the Queen's subjects in prison without trial for the purpose of preventing crime and not of punishing it. Why, then, am I opposed to this unconditional release at this moment? Well, I am obliged to give my reason. If I speak at all, I must give a full explanation, and therefore I will speak plainly, but I hope not offensively. The same grounds on which I vindicated the detention of these gentlemen—namely, the ground of the prevention of crime—leads me to object to their release, which will, I believe, tend to the encouragement of crime. . . . My colleagues have decided otherwise, and I had to consider what I should do. It may be that I am mistaken; I only trust I am. You may say, "What is the opinion of one man against that of thirteen, many of them far better qualified than he is to form an opinion?" When I hold an opinion strongly it is impossible for me to appear here and not to acknowledge that I hold it. I say I hope I may be mistaken, and that there may be an immediate diminution of out-

rage; most heartily do I hope there will be. . . . Another fear which I have, though I hope with all my heart I may be wrong, is that the price paid for the diminution of outrage, if we attain it, will be the weakening of the power of the Government—not of this Government, but of any Government—to perform their first duty, that of giving protection to life, liberty, and property, and doing it without any regard to those who threaten one or the other. . . .

How could I, with those fears, amounting to strong convictions, remain at my post? I considered the question in every possible light. No man can thus sever himself from his party without a desperate wrench. . . . It is quite true, and there is force in the statement, that I might to some extent intensify the danger by leaving my post—that it would appear to make the change more marked; but there, again, no public good is really advanced by an act of private dishonour. I do not believe that the public good has diminished: I think there is more chance of an immediate diminution of outrages, and that there will be great pleasure among hon. members and their friends at getting rid of the late Chief Secretary, and it may put them in good humour in Ireland as well as here, so that their efforts to stop outrages, if they do stop them, may be stronger than at present. Most certainly the price which must be paid for such a diminution of the outrages must be paid by weakening the Government, and would not be less if there had been the disgraceful spectacle of my swallowing what were known to be my convictions. I therefore was driven to take this step.

It was thus that surrender was made to the party of sedition and disorder. Henceforward

the National League, which, *mutato nomine*, was no other than the suppressed Land League—led by the same men, following the same ends, and administering the same funds—was to dictate its own terms to her Majesty's Ministers. And the price paid down by Ministers was the loss of two trusted colleagues, to be recouped, as they vainly hoped, by the support of the Home Rule party in Parliament.

But the reckoning was not yet complete. The first step in this new policy of conciliation was marked by one of the most terrible acts in modern history.

Earl Cowper and Mr Forster had been succeeded in the Lord Lieutenancy and Chief Secretaryship by Earl Spencer and Lord Frederick Cavendish. The last-named gentleman, a brother of the Marquis of Hartington, after attending the installation of the new Lord Lieutenant, took a car to drive to the Viceregal Lodge. Overtaking Mr Burke, a permanent official at the Castle, he left the car, and the two gentlemen walked on together through the Phoenix Park. It was a beautiful evening, between eight and nine o'clock; the pair had approached within a short distance of the Phoenix Monument when they were set upon by assassins and stabbed to death, within sight of the windows of the Viceregal Lodge.

It was still almost broad daylight ; one man saw what he thought were some roughs at horseplay, he saw two persons fall, but took no heed to the circumstance ; another witness saw four persons drive off on a car at full speed. This was the earliest reply made by the people of Ireland to the message of conciliation.

On May 6 Smith visited Coventry to speak on behalf of his party. There is a characteristic passage in a letter to his wife describing the meeting :—

The people were very warm in their reception yesterday. I had to make two little and one considerable speech yesterday, and except that one always says something that one ought not to have said, and leaves something unsaid that ought to have been said, I am content, for, on the whole, I was able, I think, to speak out in a useful sort of way. It was my aim to bring people to think rather of what was right, as distinguished from that which might be at the present moment most conducive apparently to party interests. Of course I may be wrong, and many of my friends may be wrong in our views ; but it would be a great thing in politics if we could get men to believe that running straight for what is in itself *true* and good is a better and a wiser course than compromise with evil.

. . . I am resting here to-day thoroughly — sunning myself and being quiet ; . . . but with a sense that much responsibility may rest soon upon some of us. May God guide us and give us wisdom and strength !

Smith had returned from Ireland penetrated

with a sense of the hopelessness of restoring free contract between owners and occupiers of the land, and convinced in a like degree of the impossibility of matters continuing as they were.

I never was in love [he wrote to Mr Penrose Fitzgerald¹] with peasant proprietorship as the most economical and the best mode of dealing with land. I should like to see free contract between owner and tenant alike independent, but that is impossible now, and the owner and tenant are brought into legal relations which must be unendurable. The only resource appears, and I say it with regret, to make the tenant the owner.²

The surest evidence of the material prosperity and prospects of any country is afforded by the degree in which capitalists show themselves ready to place their money in it, and the inevitable effect of a mischievous policy is to scare away investors. Smith had, some years before, been on the point of buying a large estate in Connemara, part of the property of the Martins of Ross; and although that design had not been carried out, he had kept in view the intention of acquiring land in Ireland, and, by judicious

¹ Now M.P. for Cambridge.

² This is, after all, but the reflection of an idea almost as old as observation itself:—

“Est aliquid quocunque loco, quocunque recessu,
Unius sese dominum fecisse lacertæ.”

“’Tis somewhat to be lord of some small ground,
In which a lizard may at least turn round.”

—Dryden’s ‘Juvenal,’ iii. 230.

and generous management, improving the condition of the tenantry. But what he had seen for himself of the course of affairs in that country, combined with the attitude of the Government on the agrarian question, convinced him of the hopelessness and imprudence of any such investment; and from this moment he once and for all gave up the idea, and turned his attention to the establishment of a peasant proprietary.

Smith, as a commercial man, could not but feel indignant at the dishonesty of the Government's Arrears of Rent Bill, which was being pushed through with all speed—a bill dictated by the Parnellite party, providing for the relief of debtors at the expense of their creditors. In the course of the debate on the second reading, he said that in his opinion—

A moderate measure of well-considered migration or emigration would afford the greatest possible relief to these poor tenants; and for those who remained at home there would be a much better chance of success and prosperity. I have seen with my own eyes that, under present circumstances, it is impossible for thousands of human beings to find a livelihood among the stones and bogs of districts like Connemara. I cannot see that the right hon. gentleman, the late Chief Secretary, was right in saying that in those districts this bill would afford relief.

Mr W. E. Forster. I said that nothing but emigration would relieve them.

Mr W. H. Smith. I understood that the right hon.

gentleman meant that emigration is to be delayed until after the operation of the bill on the arrears.

Mr W. E. Forster. What I said was that if the emigration was to be the compulsory result of extensive evictions, it would not be emigration conducted with the best chance of success.

Mr W. H. Smith. I quite agree with my right hon. friend, whom I have misunderstood. . . . I said last year, and I repeat it, that a measure dealing with this question, in order to be successful, must be kept beyond the range of party politics. For my own part, I am certainly unwilling to vote for a bill which appears to me unsound in principle, likely to perpetuate most grave evils, and offering a distinct premium on dishonesty.

The bill passed through the Commons and went to the Lords, who amended it in such sort that when it came back to the lower House the Ministerialists restored it to its original form, and returned it.

Lord Salisbury, conscious of the mischievous and inequitable nature of the measure, would fain have thrown it out, but was unable to persuade the Peers to take that line. But he placed on record his own detestation of such legislation :—

I believe that the bill would be only permissible with the alteration in it which makes the consent of the landlord necessary before the measure can be put into operation, and that without that alteration I believe it to be a most pernicious bill: that it is an act of simple robbery, and that it is a bill which will bear the gravest fruits in

the legislation of the future. Those are my opinions. I have had the opportunity of conferring with the noble lords who formed the majority of your lordships' House, by whom the amendment was carried which was sent down to the other House, and I found that the overwhelming majority of their lordships were of opinion that in the present state of affairs, especially those which have recently arisen in Ireland and Egypt, it is not expedient that the Arrears Bill should be thrown out. I do not share in that opinion. If I had had the power, I would have thrown out the bill. I find myself, however, in a small minority, and I shall not divide the House.

Some indication of the considerations which prevailed with the Peers against the judgment of Lord Salisbury may be found in a letter from Smith to Northcote on August 7:—

Rathbone came to me in great excitement just now, strongly urging that the Arrears Bill should pass with a compromise understood and arranged between high contracting parties. I said I was not aware of any proposals or suggestions for a compromise. Rathbone said, "Perhaps not, so far as you or Salisbury or Northcote are concerned, but I know that the Duke of Abercorn had communications with a member of the Government before he moved his amendment," and he implied that this was a transaction.

Have you or Salisbury had any hint of this? I think there is something in it.

I have had an interesting communication with Errington on the Arrears Bill, and I have asked him to put the substance of it in writing. It amounts to this: that the bill is bad, but the clergy (R.C.) will now go with the people, and there will be a fearful winter if it is not passed.

When I said, "But some day we shall have to stand out against some bad bill which may be supported for similar reasons," he could only express the belief that no such occasion would arise!—at least he hoped not.

There reappeared about this time a phenomenon to which Englishmen had long been strangers. Secretaries of State and other public functionaries might be seen walking in the streets or through the parks followed at a convenient distance by a couple of armed detectives. Threatening letters had become so frequent, they had proved too often, when disregarded, the heralds of assassination, that special protection had to be afforded to Ministers in their offices and private houses. Nor was it only members of the Government who received warnings. There is a grimly comical little note from Lord Salisbury to Smith, enclosing a letter from the Chief Constable of Hertfordshire, who said he had "received another communication, evidently from the same source as that of last year, threatening to take your [Lord Salisbury's] life and that of Mr W. H. Smith on Monday." (See facsimile.)

But it must not be understood that, even in ordinary times, the police are unobservant of the movements of Ministers. An instance of their watchfulness occurred some years later than this, when Smith was Leader of the House of Commons.

Aug. 6. 81.

HATFIELD HOUSE,

HATFIELD,

HERTS.

My dear Smith

The enclosed may
interest you. I am afraid
I am, in point of superficialities
the biggest mark of the two.

Very truly
Yours

The House had just risen, as usual, at 6 P.M. on a Wednesday, when Smith was suddenly wanted to reply to an important telegram. His secretary, Mr Pattisson, knew that he generally went home by Great George Street, and, having ascertained from the police in Palace Yard that he had started on foot, he set out to catch him. Inquiry from another policeman in George Street proved that he had not been seen to go that way, so Mr Pattisson made a cast back, took up the trail again in Parliament Street, and by asking one constable after another, finally ran into his chief in Pall Mall.

The parliamentary history of 1883 may be passed over briefly in so far as Smith took an overt part therein. Doubtless his influence was not without its effect in the tactics of the Opposition, though his staunch loyalty to Sir Stafford Northcote involved him in responsibility for a policy which the more pugnacious members of the party complained of as Fabian. None the less is it certain that it was very often Smith's part to stimulate Northcote to the more belligerent duties of a leader of Opposition. Northcote, by nature gentle and contemplative, showed himself slow to adopt the stern practice of modern parliamentary warfare, and used to exasperate the ardent spirits of his followers by what they con-

sidered unnecessary deference to Mr Gladstone's prestige; and in spite of the friendly pressure put upon their leader by Smith, Sir Richard Cross, Mr Edward Gibson, and Sir Michael Hicks Beach to keep him up to the proper combative mark, Conservative members were becoming accustomed to turn for leading to that notable group of four which, sitting below the gangway, had marked itself out for distinction as the Fourth Party.¹

The session of 1883 became memorable, however, for the hardening of the lines accentuating the cleavage between the Radical party and what had hitherto been official Liberalism. The last impress of Lord Palmerston's rule was fast fading away; men began to foresee more clearly the inevitable fusion between moderate politicians in

¹ Northcote's sterling qualities were never undervalued by those who had best opportunity of knowing them. Mr Lingen, Permanent Secretary to the Treasury (created Lord Lingen in 1885), though a political supporter of Mr Gladstone, wrote to Smith at this time:—

16th Decr. '82.

. . . I was truly concerned to read about Sir Stafford Northcote's illness, and I hope it is nothing more serious than his voyage [in the *Pandora*] will set right. Old "permanents" are able to take pretty accurate measure of successive ministers; and his party (unless they are demented) will not allow him to be worried out of service. That is my very strong opinion, which I might hesitate to express if I were not very sure it is your own, and that of every responsible politician. I should much like to see some overt and practical expression of this truth. . . .

either camp ; each year more of the ground was crumbling away from under the feet of the Whigs, and despite the warrant of their standing implied in the fact that the Marquis of Hartington was still Mr Gladstone's lieutenant in the House of Commons, it was perfectly obvious that, should anything happen to cause the retirement of the Prime Minister, no other statesman could command the allegiance of the Ministerialist following as it was then constituted.¹

¹ An article in the 'Quarterly Review' for October 1883 contained a singularly accurate estimate of the situation and forecast of its evolution. The writer was generally supposed to be the Marquis of Salisbury, and he has never thought fit to disclaim its authorship. After discussing foreign affairs, the writer went on : "It is in home affairs that the ominous tendency of which we have spoken is most conspicuous, and it is in these that the danger threatens us the most closely. Of course, when the word disintegration, as a possible peril of the present time, is mentioned, the mind naturally reverts to Ireland ; and Ireland is, no doubt, the worst symptom of our malady." This was written at a time when Liberal and Conservative leaders were vying with each other in assurance that they would never entertain the project of Home Rule. ". . . Only those who carefully watch the progress of legislative measures, and the principles on which they are constructed, can realise how much the destinies of many innocent classes are affected by the busy bargaining which goes on in the heart of the Liberal party. The Radical desires equality and the Whig does not. . . . The present Whig party is a mere survival, kept alive by tradition after its true functions and significance have passed away. A Whig who is a faithful member of the present Liberal party has to submit to this peculiar fate, not only that he inherits the political opinions he professes—a lot which befalls many Englishmen—but that he also inherits a liability to be com-

It looked as if the crisis would have to be faced. Preparations had been made for a third

pelled to change them at the bidding of the leader whom the Radical party may have chosen for him. There are many strange and unattractive functions which, under the laws of caste, a Hindoo cheerfully accepts as the inherited burden of his life ; but probably few of them suffer more than an educated Englishman, who thinks that it does not consist with the honour of his family to profess in public the opinions he really holds, or to oppose the political changes on which in his heart he looks with horror. Such a stress upon conviction is too severe to be permanent, and the ranks of the party are sensibly thinning under its pressure. Many have come to the conclusion that genealogical consistency in the choice of political associates is of less importance than the maintenance of sound principles in legislation, and therefore have either openly joined the Conservative party, or co-operate with it upon all great questions of the day. Others have taken the plunge into advanced Radicalism, and are the foremost to scoff at the old-fashioned pretensions of the friends they have left behind. But the majority have neither the courage to abandon their Whig professions nor to part from their Radical allies. They may often be met helplessly lamenting their sad fate ; for the only solution of their difficulties that has as yet presented itself to them is a combination of public loyalty (to their party) with private imprecation. . . . The air is filled with rumours of new negotiations and successful bargains (with the Home Rulers). Another 'deed without a name' is likely to place the Irish vote at the disposal of the Government for the purposes of a Reform Bill. Such complaisance at such a crisis will deserve warm recognition ; and it will be duly given in the form of a bill for the establishment of local government in Ireland, which is to be conducted by elective councils. No doubt the day will come when votes will again be in request for a critical occasion, and the entire emancipation, and possibly the consolidation, of these councils will be the price. Will the Whigs be parties to this arrangement also ? And if so, how long can the final disintegration of the empire be postponed ?"

Happily for their own honour and the safety of the country, the Whigs took a courageous line when the occasion arose.

campaign in Mid-Lothian, and all the world was looking forward to a revelation of Ministerialist policy, when suddenly it was announced that Mr Gladstone's health had given way, and that he had been ordered to the south of Europe by his doctor. The Prime Minister was then over threescore years and ten : there was nothing surprising in the reason given for this sudden change of plan ; but it was noted at the time that his indisposition relieved him from the necessity of visiting Mid-Lothian under circumstances of far greater difficulty than when, as an independent chief, he had come to pour the vials of his wrath on a Tory Administration. It is far easier to gain plaudits by attack than by defence ; it had been a simple matter to raise a laugh against Lord Beaconsfield on account of his description of the state of Ireland to the Duke of Marlborough, or a groan against him because of the defence of the "unspeakable Turk" ; but it would have been a far more serious task to explain the disastrous course events had taken in Ireland, and to justify the bombardment of Alexandria.

Howbeit, the Prime Minister went abroad, and for some weeks after the opening of Parliament the Marquis of Hartington acted as leader of the House. Fortunate was the party

in being able to command the services of such a lieutenant, for the Opposition, taking courage from the gain of a few seats on by-elections mustered in better spirits than at any time since their overthrow in 1880. The debate on the Address was prolonged over eleven nights, the chief matters discussed being the Egyptian and Irish policy of the Government. Perhaps the most interesting speech in the course of it was that of Mr Forster, who had so narrowly escaped assassination the year before.¹ After entering more fully into the reasons for his resignation than he had done at the time it took place, he turned upon Mr Parnell with a vigour of gesture and invective which those who witnessed will not easily forget. He challenged Parnell to explain

¹ An Irish official, writing to Mr Smith immediately after the Phoenix Park tragedy, said: "The news of the Dublin murders first became known to the people throughout my district about mid-day on Sunday, and from that time until Monday afternoon, when the Parnell-Davitt manifesto appeared condemning the deed, there was apparently a studied reticence on the subject, as if the people had not fully appreciated the political bearing of the event, and did not wish to commit themselves by any expression of opinion. I heard, however, of a remark made by a typical member of the more respectable lower class, that 'he could not understand why Lord F. Cavendish had been murdered, while nothing had been done to Mr Forster, who had all along been stirring up the landlords against the people.'" How narrow and frequent had been the escapes of Mr Forster from the knives of hired ruffians was amply shown in the informer's evidence during the trial of the Phoenix Park murderers.

his knowledge of the criminal acts acquiesced in, if not instigated by, the Land League :—

No mere disclaimer of connection with outrage will be sufficient. We have had disclaimers before. Do not let the honourable member suppose that I charge him with complicity with murder: but this I do charge against the honourable member and his friends—that he has allowed himself to continue the leader and avowed chief of an organisation which not merely advocated and ostensibly and openly urged the ruin of those who oppose it by “boycotting” them, and making life almost more miserable than death, but which prompted or organised outrage and incited to murder. . . . The only ground on which he can escape responsibility is utter ignorance of their conduct. . . . I cannot believe in his absolute ignorance. . . . I will repeat again what the charge is I make against him. Probably a more serious charge was never made by any member of this House against another member. It is not that he himself directly planned or perpetrated outrages or murders, but that he either connived at them, or when warned——

“It is a lie!” shouted Mr Parnell and Mr O’Kelly, and the speech was interrupted by the Speaker “naming” the latter member, and his suspension, after a division, on the motion of Lord Hartington.

Before these scenes took place a letter had been read from the irrepressible Mr Bradlaugh, who reminded Mr Speaker that he had been three times elected for Northampton, and claimed

to be allowed to take the oath. Lord Hartington announced that the Government would bring in a measure to enable persons in Mr Bradlaugh's peculiar position to affirm instead of swearing, and the member for Northampton undertook, through his colleague Mr Labouchere, not to attempt to come to the table again till that measure should be disposed of. This difficult question, however, was not to be settled thus, for the Affirmation Bill (generally spoken of by the Opposition as the Bradlaugh Relief Bill) cost the Government a defeat, for it was rejected by 292 to 289.

The Agricultural Holdings Bill brought about the conflict between the two Houses which the policy of Ministers was causing to be looked for as the normal incident of an expiring session; but after making a stand for the principle of free contract between landlord and tenant—one of those principles of political economy which, Mr Gladstone had informed the House, might be very honourable and practical “if we were legislating for the inhabitants of Jupiter and Saturn”—the House of Lords gave way, and allowed the bill to pass into law.

During 1883 a good deal of controversy arose in ecclesiastical circles over the Union of Benefices Amendment Bill, the object of which was, briefly,

the consolidation or redistribution of parishes to suit the altered conditions of population. It was a question on which Smith held strong views, supported by the result of personal inspection of the various churches in London. He always advocated a few well-manned churches as preferable to a large number of half-filled and ill-served ones. For instance, that church in which he took so much interest and contributed so largely to rebuild—St Mary's, Portsea—has a permanent staff of ten curates under Canon Jacob. On this occasion he had to defend himself from the censure of a gentleman claiming to represent the Dean and Chapter of St Paul's as well as the City churchwardens. Smith's reply was full of temperate good sense :—

Some years ago I made a round of the City churches on a Sunday morning, and there were many in which there was not even an approach to a congregation. The streets were silent, houses had been turned into warehouses, and the residential population was gone.

I thought, and still think, that it would be well if many—not all—of these churches could follow the people to their new homes.

Every institution is more or less on its trial, and it is, I think, certain that large endowments existing only as sinecures will be swept away, and taken by the strong hand from the uses to which they were devoted by our ancestors.

This is the meaning of the alliance which is offered to

the opponents of the Bishop of London's Bill by the Liberationists. They are wise in their generation in cherishing what the general public will regard as an abuse; and in preventing a reappropriation of Church funds, until they are strong enough to confiscate them for secular purposes, which with your help they soon will be. —Yours very sincerely,

W. H. SMITH.

Speaking at Exeter on January 18, 1884, Smith devoted himself to a criticism of the policy of the Government, in having first intervened to quell Arabi's rebellion against the Khedive, and then, having shown vacillation, involving risks of renewed disasters and massacre, in the management of affairs in that country. He poured ridicule on the proposal to confer by-and-by a representative constitution upon Egypt.

I value [he said] free institutions, and I desire to see institutions resting upon as hard a basis as possible; . . . but to talk about a free representative system in Egypt is about as wise as to talk about a free representative system farther on in the middle of Africa. Ask the people who are under the rule of the Mahdi to elect a House of Commons and select a House of Lords, and you have a people quite as ready, quite as capable, and quite as educated for the purpose of constitutional liberty as you have in Egypt at the present time.

The Government had just taken a new step in their Egyptian policy. General Gordon—"Chinese" Gordon, as he was called in honour

of his services in China—had been summoned from Brussels, where he had gone to prepare for a journey up the Congo, and despatched to Khartoum, which he was directed to hold against the advancing Mahdi.

The following week, January 25, Smith was the principal speaker at an immense meeting in Dublin, and having dealt with the Egyptian imbroglio in Devonshire, he proceeded to discuss the other question which was destined to share with Egypt almost the whole time of the approaching session. He stated courageously his objection to the extension of household suffrage to Irish counties:—

I find at present there are in Ireland 228,000 county electors, and it is now proposed that every inhabitant of a house shall be a voter. The census gives the number of good farmhouses at 422,241, out of which come the 228,000 electors; but it also gives, I grieve from the bottom of my heart to say, 425,140 mud cabins, so that if the mud cabins are enfranchised, the mud cabins will be the majority of the electorate of Ireland. . . . And not only so, but in many counties the majority of the electors will be of that class which are perfectly illiterate. This is the proposal which is deliberately made with the view of assuaging popular discontent, and preventing those who are supposed to support Mr Parnell from having another victory.

Immediately after the meeting of Parliament

early in February, though not before the House had to undergo that which had become an incident inseparable from the opening of the sessions of this House of Commons—namely, an unseemly wrangle with Mr Bradlaugh—the Government were put on their defence on a motion by Sir Stafford Northcote reflecting on their policy in Egypt, especially in regard to the events which had brought about the massacre of Hicks Pasha and his force. The majority in favour of Ministers was only 19, in a House of 578 members. In May a second vote of censure on the same subject was rejected by a majority of 28.

The debates on Foreign Affairs occupied much of the time which the Government ardently desired to devote to the realisation of the favourite scheme of Mr G. O. Trevelyan¹—the equalisation of the county and borough franchise. This bill, which Mr Gladstone introduced on February 29, was received by the Conservative party with half-hearted disapproval. Undoubtedly their secret opinion was that the franchise was already low enough and wide enough to ensure representation of every class and interest. Had they felt free to deal with the measure as their judgment dictated, it would have been met with a direct

¹ Now the Right Hon. Sir George Trevelyan, Bart., M.P.

negative; but they were hampered by the consideration that such a course could not but end in defeat in the House of Commons, and incur the hostility of the masses whom it was proposed to enfranchise. Smith spoke on the second night of the debate, opposing the bill on the ground of the terrible danger involved in placing the balance of power in the hands of the ignorant denizens of Irish mud-cabins:—

It was avowed by hon. members from Ireland that they intended to hold the scales and to determine the course of the policy of the Government of this country. It would be unwise and foolish to give such a power, knowing perfectly well how it would be exercised. . . . The Prime Minister of England would have the satisfaction of having done his best, at the end of his great career, to make parliamentary government in England practically impossible.

Ultimately the Opposition took up their stand upon the objection to passing a Reform Bill without knowing the provisions of the ancillary measure for redistribution of seats. By June 26 the bill had passed through all its stages in the Commons, and in the House of Lords it was received by an amendment by Earl Cairns, framed in the complex and ponderous prose so dear to parliamentary tradition, to the effect “that this House, while prepared to concur in a well-considered and complete scheme for the extension

of the franchise, does not think it right to assent to the second reading of a bill having for its object a fundamental change in the electoral body, which is not accompanied by provisions which will ensure the full and free representation of the people, or by any adequate security that the bill shall not come into operation except on an entire scheme."

The position was an anxious one, and it required all the moral courage of the Peers to face it, for they were loudly threatened with serious consequences if they ventured to interfere. They rose to the occasion. They refused to entertain Lord Granville's pledge on behalf of his colleagues that a Redistribution Bill would be brought in next year. The Government might not survive till next year; or if they did, what guarantee was there that redistribution would be planned on satisfactory and equitable lines? They were not going to enfranchise two million new electors and trust to whatever "jerrymandering" the Liberal party agent might devise for the constituencies. Lord Salisbury declared picturesquely that he was not going to consent to the discussion of redistribution with a rope round his neck. So Lord Cairns's amendment was carried, which had the effect of hanging up the

bill indefinitely. In the end, after many negotiations and endeavours to arrive at a compromise, Parliament was prorogued on August 14, on the understanding that it was to meet again in the autumn, when the Franchise Bill should be introduced again, coupled with a full scheme of redistribution of seats. 7

The vacation which intervened, of little more than two months, was one of little ease. Mr Gladstone harangued the electors of Mid-Lothian; many hard things were uttered against the House of Lords in other parts of the country by his colleagues; but when Parliament assembled on October 24, a *modus vivendi* had been arrived at. 9
The Franchise Bill was introduced in the same form in which it left the House of Commons in summer, and a Redistribution Bill, based on a compromise arrived at between the Government and Opposition, and elaborated by consultations of the Cabinet at which Lord Salisbury and Sir Stafford Northcote attended, was read a second time in the House of Commons. The Franchise Bill then passed through both Houses, and the discussion of the Redistribution Bill having been postponed till the following year, the House adjourned on December 5.

During these years of opposition, although

Smith was no longer directly responsible for any part of the military or naval defences of the country, he was incessantly in communication, not only with officials in charge of our coast defences and naval arsenals, but with our admirals in foreign waters and with generals commanding British forces in Egypt. He took as much pains to ascertain the condition of our fortifications and the progress of work in the dockyards as if he had been an intelligence officer examining the armaments of an enemy. The correspondence on these subjects is exceedingly voluminous, and bearing as it does upon a state of things which alters every year, would not bear quotation now, except to show the extraordinary exertions which Smith, even while his party were in Opposition, made to assure himself that the public money was being profitably laid out. In acting thus, an ex-Minister might be suspected of a desire to obtain such information as might sustain an indictment of his adversary's administration; but no trace of such a motive can be found in Smith's speeches during the debates on naval affairs from 1880 to 1885. His criticism was firm and sometimes severe, but he always showed an anxiety to assist rather than to thwart the Admiralty of the day.

Here is a very brief extract from correspondence which passed between Smith and an Engineer

officer whom he had asked to report to him on the state of the defences on the south coast:—

GREENLANDS, HENLEY-ON-THAMES,
28th Jan. 1885.

DEAR COLONEL —,—It is very kind of you to take so much trouble on my behalf. The theory on which I proceed is that our defences should be like a door or gate, capable of being closed at will, and instantly, whenever the necessity may arise. For this purpose there must, of course, be men whose duty it shall be to shut the gate, and who are practised and ready for that duty. If they are not told off for it, there is no security that they will be ready.

I do not ask for fort upon fort, or mines behind mines; but taking any statement of a competent authority *now* as to what would be sufficient against any probable attack, that that sufficiency should be *efficient*; that there should be men to man the guns, and stores of material in the magazines. Whether the mines for submarine defence are prepared, and whether there are men instructed, trained to the difficult duty of laying them down, and whether they have the boats, tugs, &c., at hand necessary to a quick and complete performance of this duty on a sudden call.

I hope you may be able to give me some facts to guide me.

Following this there came letters from Colonel — on January 29, February 10, 11, 12, 18, and 19, enclosing maps and describing the position and range of guns, the strength of garrisons, and all the points of detail upon which a military man might have required information, though, as it

might have been thought, of small moment to a civilian.

Sometimes the information supplied on the same subject from different sources was a little perplexing. Two letters written by separate officials at Portsmouth on March 11, 1885, were hard to reconcile with each other :—

DEAR MR SMITH,—Colossus is practically complete ; the only work remaining to be done are the overhead runners for working the magazines. . . . It will only take us three or four weeks to fit them after delivery.

DEAR MR SMITH,—The answers to all your questions, I regret to say, are most unsatisfactory. Colossus is not ready for the pendant. Her loading gear is not finished. I don't think it is taken in hand yet by Elswick. If all the mechanism for the four guns was actually in the yard, it would take at least two months to get them fitted on board ready for sea, and that with much pressure. Her magazines and shell-rooms are not complete.

It was by this means that, while free from the cares of office, Smith kept himself in touch with the details of administration, and made himself ready to resume, should the occasion arise, the charge of one of the great departments of State.

Incessant work was, however, beginning to tell upon him. He gave himself no rest, and although not yet threescore, an age at which, in some men, the physical powers give little warning

of diminution, Smith's letters contain frequent reference to his failing strength. In reply to a letter from his sister, Miss Augusta Smith, on his birthday, he wrote :—

June 24, 1884.

. . . It is very pleasant to know that I have the warm affection and that I am in the minds of my sisters. But I am getting older, and I am also getting tired; but I have wonderful health considering the small amount of sleep I get. I am at work, with very little rest, all day, and my day begins at 9 or 10, and goes on until $\frac{1}{2}$ past 2 or 3 in the morning.

Again on December 24 to the same :—

I wish to send you one word of Christmas greeting. As I get older, and I am sensible I *am* getting older, it is useful to take account of time, and compare season with season and year with year. I remember when we were children together, and how we talked in your bedroom over our projects and wishes. It seems a short time ago, but there have been great changes since then, and my children are now doing what we did together.

Another letter to the same during that year contains a sentence worthy of note, coming from a man of so much experience in business. It refers to some missing papers concerning a relative :—

If there is one thing people ought to insist on more than another, it is that all deeds and papers referring to their property should be in their own possession, instead of leaving them with their lawyers.

CHAPTER IV.

1880-1885.

PURCHASE OF THE PANDORA—NOTES OF CRUISES—THE MEDITERRANEAN—VISIT TO THE SULTAN—STORMY PASSAGE TO ALEXANDRIA — REPORTED LOSS OF THE PANDORA — THE ITALIAN AND SICILIAN COASTS—GREECE—NORWAY—DENMARK—HOLLAND—COPENHAGEN AND CRONSTADT—CAPTAIN BLOW.

WHEN Smith, having been re-elected in three successive Parliaments for Westminster, had been for twelve years its representative, and during six out of the twelve had been called on to discharge the functions of two laborious offices in addition to the ordinary work of a member, he found that each year had added to the weight of the task, and each year leisure to spend with his family had become less and less. He had, on going to the Treasury in 1874, resigned his seat on the London School Board, and on entering the Cabinet in 1877, he had retired from active partnership in the firm of W. H. Smith & Son,

though still, and down to the close of his life, continuing to take a warm interest in all that concerned its welfare.

When in 1880 he found himself relieved alike from the strain of office and from constant attention to business, he turned for recreation to that pursuit in which so many men of English race find their delight—one, too, which his administration of naval affairs had made specially attractive to him. He bought the steam yacht Pandora, 500 tons, from Mr Penn, who had fitted her with powerful engines, made under his own superintendence, and for four successive years she was commissioned for extended summer cruises.¹ Those who were privileged to take part in these excursions invariably speak of them as delightful memories: some say that none saw Mr Smith at his best except when—*procul negotiis*—he got beyond reach of mails, telegrams, and newspapers for days together.

The Rev. Canon Pinder, rector of Rotherfield-Greys, was a frequent companion in these cruises, and has communicated the following description of the daily routine:—

It is a common complaint against yachting that life on board is dull, wearisome, and monotonous. In some

¹ The Pandora had, previously to this, been well known as the Thistle, belonging to the Duke of Hamilton.

instances it may be so; but I question if such was ever the experience of those who had the privilege of cruising in the Pandora. No day seemed dull, whether at sea or in port. It began with the morning douche or plunge over the ship's side, or in the case of the less adventurous, with the fresh-filled bath opening beneath each cabin's valve-fitted floor. A blow on deck . . . prepared the way for breakfast, which followed family prayers in the saloon at 8.45, though Mr Smith himself had often risen before his guests, and been busy writing letters or making arrangements for the day. After breakfast, each one followed his or her bent. Some read or wrote in the comfortable deck-house; others betook themselves to the upper deck to watch the steamer's course, consult charts or guide-books, clean guns and pipes, look out for passing vessels or sights on shore, while our host, in his sanctum of the inner deck-house, when not busied with blue-books and despatches, would indulge himself in the luxury of a novel or review. There was a charming library in the saloon, consisting of "Murrays" and "Baedekers" without end, good editions of Dickens, Thackeray, Bulwer, the chief English poets, and suchlike, not without a sprinkling of graver books and even of "Sunday literature." Nor were classical works, such as Homer and Plato, unknown or neglected on board; while studies occasionally went on of Norse, or Russian, or Romaic, according to the country next to be visited. Toward luncheon-time, if at sea, books were exchanged for constitutionals or games on deck, which often continued through the afternoon till dinner at 7.30. About ten o'clock, after a look at the night from deck, the ladies retired to their cabins, while the men of the party opened their "tobacco parliament" for an hour or so, until about 11 P.M. all lapsed into silence and repose.

When in harbour, most of the day was spent in sight-seeing. No time on these occasions was lost after breakfast. Carriages had always been ordered to be ready on shore to take the whole party to whatever was worth visiting far or near, while the best dragomen or *valets de place* were engaged to facilitate access to museums, galleries, gardens, palaces, and the like, according to the taste and inclination of the members. When in ports such as Copenhagen or Cronstadt, Spezzia or Kiel, Mr Smith never lost any opportunity (readily accorded to his position and popularity) of going over arsenals, and inspecting ships, armaments, forts, torpedoes—everything, in short, that the custom of the country permitted to be shown. . . . He had not only the keenest eye for observing things, but also a singularly open mind to appreciate a novelty whenever he saw an improvement upon systems, constructions, and methods prevailing in his own country. After such visits he usually invited the consuls, officers, or other leading men to luncheon or dinner on board the yacht, from whom he would gather no small amount of valuable information, while their society and conversation lent the charm of variety and interest to the rest of the party on board.

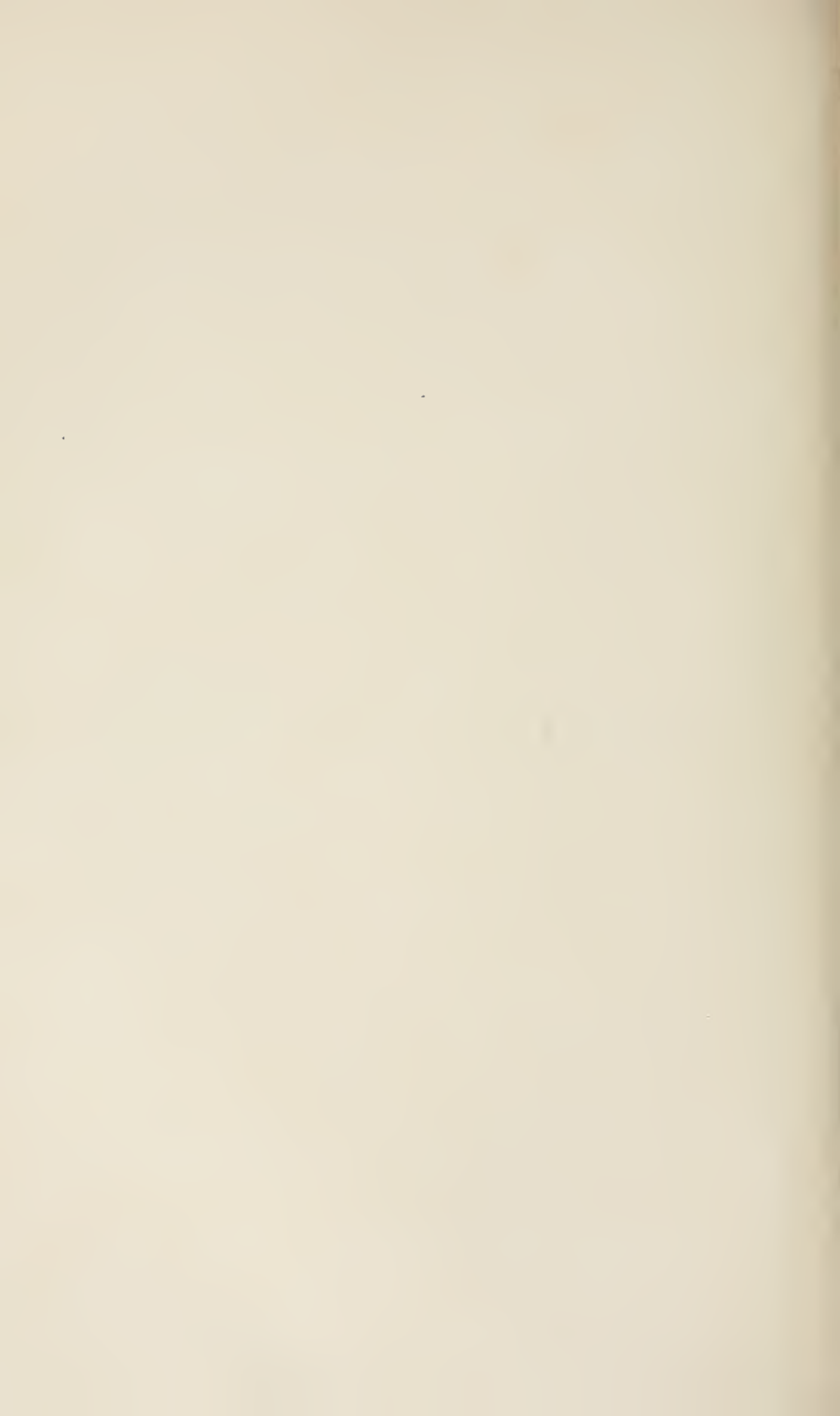
Nothing could exceed the courtesy and honour with which the owner of the Pandora was received wherever he went. At Constantinople he met with every attention from the Sultan; at Cronstadt the Admiral of the port placed his own steamer and pinnace at Mr Smith's disposal to convey him and his guests, whenever they wished, to and from St Petersburg; while at Kirkwall, no sooner was it known that the yacht which had anchored in the roads during the night had the leader of the House of Commons on board than it was resolved to present him with the freedom of the borough, which accordingly was

conferred upon him amid much applause and speech-making, the whole party of the Pandora being required to exhibit themselves, as partners in the ceremony, on the dais. Not that Mr Smith had any predilection for functions of this kind. To see him in the zenith of enjoyment it was necessary to have been with him amid the wilder scenes of the north or west of Scotland, to steam in the autumn afternoons far up some quiet secluded loch of Ross-shire, Sutherlandshire, or Skye, with scarce a house or a shanty in sight. Nothing delighted him on these occasions more than to go ashore in the gig, and enjoy a walk of two or three hours with one of his daughters or a guest, Mrs Smith being seldom strong enough to accompany him, while the more active of the party would indulge in sailing, fishing, or climbing the heights that overlooked the loch. He had a keen appreciation of natural beauty, especially in its wilder aspects, intensified by a fondness for trees and flowers and birds, though the conversation, stimulated by these walks, often strayed away into the domain of social and political questions like the crofter difficulty in the Highlands, and similar subjects suggested by the country he was visiting.

Sunday was a day faithfully observed on board the Pandora. It was generally arranged for the yacht to be in port, and every opportunity was afforded for enjoyment of rest and quiet throughout the vessel, extending even to the kitchen (dinner on that day being always cold excepting the vegetables). If there was an English church in the place, Mr Smith and his party always (weather permitting) went ashore to attend it; if there was not, morning service was held in the saloon at 10.45 for all on board, including the officers, servants, and crew. Mr Smith always read the lessons himself, while a clerical friend in his surplice would preach a



THE PANDORA AT ANCHOR.



short sermon from an extemporised desk, draped with the Union-jack. Nor was there lack of music in the service, one of Mr Smith's daughters accompanying on the piano the favourite hymns of sailors, in which they joined with heart and voice. In the afternoon a long ramble was usually enjoyed, followed by a shortened evensong with chants and hymns, which the sailors attended or not, as they pleased. It was felt by many that not the least pleasant days of a cruise on the Pandora were its quiet Sundays, with the simple hearty worship of a congregation numbering about thirty, that met together in the yacht's saloon.

In 1880 the cruise was in the Mediterranean. The Pandora was sent to Venice, where, on September 10, Mr Smith and his party joined her. A faithful journal was kept by one of his daughters, but, like most narratives of travel in this much-traversed and over-described globe, it tells a well-worn tale of visits to scenes that many have witnessed and all have read about. Here and there there occur good bits of descriptive and suggestive notes, as when, at Venice, they

returned the call of Mr Rawdon Brown, a nice old gentleman (mentioned by Mr Ruskin in his 'Stones of Venice'), who told us that he had been here "since the year of our Lord 1833," and had not slept out of his house "since the year of our Lord 1855." He is very thin and spare, with white hair, deep-set eyes, and a furrowed forehead. He is occupied in searching through the Venetian archives

for any notice of things connected with the history of England, and has now got down as far as Queen Elizabeth.

At Trieste :—

The consul, Captain Burton,¹ and his wife came on board. . . . He knows twenty-nine languages; . . . he lived once for nine months in Mecca, without their having found out he was not a Moslem. . . . Mrs Burton wrote 'Home Life in Syria,' and other things, and is very clever and amusing.

After visiting the ports of the Adriatic, hospitably entreated by officers of Austrian and Italian war-ships, and spending some time among the Ionian Islands, they arrived at the Piræus on October 13. Leaving on 18th, they steamed up the Saronic Gulf, spent a day at Corinth, after which they left for Nauplia. On 20th the yacht was headed north, and leaving Marathon on the left, passed up the enchanting channel between Eubœa and the mainland, through the straits of Chalcis, and dropped her anchor off Salonica on 23d. Arriving on the 27th at Chanak, in the Dardanelles, the authorities, misled by the white ensign of the Royal Yacht Squadron, took the Pandora for a man-of-war, an impression which was confirmed when they found out that the owner was no less a personage than the late

¹ Afterwards Sir R. F. Burton, K.C.M.G.

First Lord of the Admiralty. Everything, however, having been explained, the yacht steamed up to Constantinople, where she lay till November 9.

The following extracts are from a memorandum which was kept by Smith of his interviews with the Sultan :—

16th November 1880.—We dined with the Sultan last evening, in compliance with an invitation which his Majesty gave to Mr Goschen and to myself personally at the interview which he gave us on Monday the 7th, when he inquired particularly how many we were in family, and insisted on my wife and Emily and Helen coming with me to the dinner. . . . Our dinner yesterday almost took the character of a State banquet. An A.D.C. came on board in the afternoon, begging me to come in uniform if I had brought one with me, but if not, in civil dress. The Ambassador, Mr Goschen, his private Secretary, and Mr Jervoise, the Secretary, were in uniform. Said, the Prime Minister, and the Foreign Minister, Musurus, and a number of other officials were present. The Sultan was in uniform, as also were the two little Princes, and the party altogether must have numbered at least 30.

The Goschens, my wife and I, were received by the Sultan before dinner. The others assembled in a room, and went direct to their places at table, standing up to face the Sultan, when he walked in with Mrs Goschen on his arm. . . . The Sultan's son and cousin came on board next day, and we showed them the ship. An hour later I went up to the Kiosk, and was at once shown in. Munier Bey was waiting to receive me, and he

began the conversation by saying that his Majesty wished to confer a decoration upon me as a mark of his favour and an expression of the pleasure our visit had given him. I told him that I should be glad if his Majesty would allow me to decline the honour, as although I was very sensible indeed of the kind and gracious feeling which suggested the proposal, his Majesty would see that it would be misunderstood in England, and that it would embarrass us in speaking as plainly as I should wish on my return of Turkish affairs. I added that I should be grateful to his Majesty if he would give me his photograph and his autograph, and that I desired nothing more.

Munier then began to speak of politics, and I said that my friends with whom I acted, and the Conservative party, were most desirous that Turkey should be maintained as a strong and well-governed country, and that public opinion in England would certainly come round to the side of Turkey if she carried out the engagements into which she had entered. . . . The Sultan received me standing and shook hands, and motioned me to a seat before him on the other side of a table, Munier sitting next to me. The conversation began by inquiries on his part after my wife and my daughters and the usual compliments. The Sultan then said it gave him great pleasure to receive me, not only on my own account, but also because I was a member of a Government and of a party which had always been the friends of Turkey. He had seen with great regret that the language and the policy of Mr Gladstone had made public opinion in England turn against Turkey, and he hoped that Mr Gladstone was now losing his influence in England, and that my friends would soon be in power again, for the good of England and of Turkey too. I said that . . . the Tory

party desired, as an article of their faith, the maintenance of the ancient Empires of Europe, and they wished to see Turkey prosperous, well-governed, and at peace. I said in England great importance was attached to the performance of the obligations of the treaties by which Turkey was bound, and if those treaties were carried out, public opinion in England would come round in favour of Turkey, and it would not be possible for Mr Gladstone to resist it. I said it was possible there had been some change in our favour lately, but the Parliament had been only just elected, and unless some grave events happened, it must be some years before a fresh election could occur and before it was possible for the Conservatives to return to power, and therefore I was afraid his Majesty must consider Mr Gladstone's Government as the Government of England for some time to come. . . . The Sultan replied at great length that he had worked incessantly to keep his promise. First, he had sent Izzet Pasha to Dulcigno, and he was an officer of great experience, and he hoped he would effect the cession. Then he sent Riaz Pasha, who was known in England to be a very good man; and at last, as he had failed to come over the objections of the Albanians, he sent Dervish Pasha, who was very well known for the services he had rendered in the defence of Batoum. He could thoroughly depend upon him to carry it out as soon as possible, and he was a man who would obey not only the letter but the spirit of instructions given to him. The Sultan spoke with great animation, and apparently with great earnestness and sincerity. . . . He thanked me with some warmth for coming to Turkey, begging me to accept a small souvenir of my visit. . . . He handed this to me in a paper envelope, which I could not open in his presence. . . . Munier came with me into the room into which all

visitors are shown, and on opening the envelope I found that it contained a flat Turkish watch with a guard chain. Munier assured me it was the watch his Majesty was in the habit of wearing. . . . When I got into the carriage, Musurus came to the side of it to wish me *bon voyage*, adding that he hoped soon to be back in England and to find the Tories returned to power. I told him there was no chance of that, but he said there was already a change, and Gladstone was losing power. He had been very hard to Turkey. I replied that his Government was the Government of England, and that he must reckon with it as with England. It was useless to entertain any other view. . . . I said, "Carry out your engagements, and the old feeling in favour of Turkey will return, and even Mr Gladstone will not be able to go against it." I said the Sultan's word was pledged. "Yes," he said, "to the Treaty of Berlin, but not to the Conference—to Dulcigno, but not to Greece." I admitted the difference as an important one. "We have not signed the [result of] the Conference," said he; "we did sign the Treaty." "Well," I said, "Turkey wants peace." "Yes," he admitted, "to develop her great resources, her natural wealth, to make roads and railroads." "And," I added, "to give her attention to the means necessary to the security of life and property. While you are engaged in the questions of Dulcigno and Greece you are not at peace—you have no time to consider all these other matters, and pretexts remain for the interference of one or other or all the Powers in your affairs, which you ought to remove." He appeared to agree with me, and I drove off.

Other similar interviews took place with persons of less importance, including Midhat Pasha,

at other points of the cruise, which was extended to Smyrna, Rhodes, Cyprus, and Beyrout ; whence the party had a very stormy passage to Alexandria. Mr Dickson, H.M. consul at Beyrout, wrote to Mr Smith on December 16 :—

We were exceedingly anxious about you after you left, as the storm here was fearful, and our forebodings became still more gloomy when, on Monday, a report spread through the town that the yacht was seen to founder off Cyprus, and only one person was saved. . . . An Italian vessel had gone ashore somewhere on the coast, and she might have been confounded with the Pandora.

The yacht had indeed been in some peril, for a furious gale was beginning when she left Beyrout, and the reason that induced Smith to carry on was that Parliament had been summoned to meet in January instead of February, and he was anxious to be at his post in time.

The return voyage was by Malta and through the Straits of Messina to Nice, which was reached on January 3, 1881.

The cruise of 1881 was also in the Mediterranean. The party embarked at Nice on October 31, and in the voyage to Palermo by Corsica the sea-going powers of the Pandora were fully tested, for very heavy weather was encountered. To navigate the Gulf of Lyons in a storm is no child's play, and, as the Italian papers had

it in recording the damage done, this *fu un aere-moto accompagnato da una poggia copiosissima*. After lying at Palermo till November 6, they arrived at Malta on the 8th, at Syracuse on 12th, and at Naples on 13th—an earthly paradise which detained them till 23d. Of course they visited Pompeii and Baiæ, and there is in one of Smith's letters to a friend at this time a wistful expression of his lifelong regret at having been debarred from a classical education. Referring to Pompeii he says:—

It is an odd sensation to be walking over pavement 2000 years old, with the marks of wheels and traffic fresh upon them, and to sit down in houses whose owners are only known by the inscriptions on the walls. One thing is clear, that in many respects our cultivation and taste for art has not improved since that time. We are less cruel in our amusements, but the elegance of their buildings greatly exceeded ours in many respects. While at Naples too we visited Baiæ, rendered famous by Horace, and saw evidences of past grandeur and luxury which contrast strongly with present poverty; but the Bay is lovely, and may well have been a place of luxurious repose for Emperors and Patricians in the palmy days of the Roman empire; but I should weary you if I told you what we have seen. I sigh over the indistinctness of my recollections of the small amount of classical literature I read when I was young, and wish now I could people all these places with the gods and goddesses and the perhaps stronger men and women whose stories are told in our school-books.

But the right method of biography is not, to use Sir Walter Scott's phrase, to present extracts from an individual's conversation or correspondence with "a cocked hat and a dress cane." Smith was one—

"Qui mores hominum multorum vidit et urbes,"¹

and was wont to find far more interest in the events of the present day, and in the condition and aspirations of living people, than in reverie over the past. His mind was of that practical kind which persons of the artistic temperament are in the habit of despising as "philistine." A good illustration of this, however much it may cause Philhellenes to shudder, occurs in a letter written in 1880 from the Piræus to his step-daughter, Mrs Codrington :—

It is a great pity, but I am not a poet or poetically inclined as you are, and so I should not care to live in Greece or with Greeks. Greece is a land of paradoxes. It is very mountainous, very arid, and very hot, and yet in places where there are oliveyards and vineyards it is green and beautiful ; but at this season all is brown and dusty, and the beauty of which poets rave is difficult to find. . . . Sight-seeing is a dreadful business. . . . We spent the day in museums and buying some half-dozen tinted figures dug up out of graves 3000 years old. . . . Dr Schliemann really thinks he has found Agamemnon's

¹ "Manners and towns of various nations viewed."

skull. I am not sure myself that Agamemnon ever existed, except in Homer's imagination; but don't tell Mr Gladstone that if you meet him, or he will certainly have me put to death. . . . We are all going to Mycenæ to visit the tomb of Agamemnon to-morrow, and there is great danger if we go on this way of the whole family becoming Pagan and believers in the new God—Gladstone.

But he drops this languid tone of dissatisfaction when he turns to the social and political prospects of Greece:—

Everybody is a soldier, and drilling and trumpeting is going on every day all round. M. Tricoupi, the Prime Minister, told me they would soon have 80,000 men enrolled, and said he, "Now we have got them we must do something with them. We must either have victory or defeat; it is impossible to send them back without fighting." And he spoke of defeat as lightly as of victory, apparently thinking one as good as the other, for they say, "If we are beaten, Europe must come to our help, and we are quite sure she will."

Another and earlier instance of a similar predominance of practical considerations is furnished by the Rev. M. A. Nisbet, who, in 1871, was Smith's companion in a visit to the Passion Play at Ammergau:—

During our drive to Ammergau Mr Smith discussed many of the hard problems which the London School Board was then endeavouring to solve. He was specially

interested in the religious question. He saw that many of the difficulties were platform difficulties and nothing more, and that once a commencement was made most of them would disappear. He desired loyally to carry out the Act of 1870, in which it was laid down that in Board Schools no religious catechism or religious formulary which is distinctive of any particular denomination shall be taught. But, short of this, the Act allowed the fullest teaching of Christian truths, and he was anxious that Christianity, and not simply morality, should be taught. The minutes of the early meetings of the London School Board will show the part he took in this controversy, and I believe he suggested the terms of the resolution which finally was adopted. Another subject which I recollect at that time interested him was the publications of the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge. Do you think, he asked, that the books the Society are now issuing are up to modern requirements—of a popular character—and taking in appearance? Not a hint did he give me that he had had any part in bringing about this improved condition of affairs; but he expressed his utmost satisfaction in the result. This absence of self-glorification was a marked trait in his character.

The homeward voyage in 1881 was by Civita Vecchia, where they left the yacht and spent a week in Rome; thence to Leghorn, whence excursions were made to Pisa; to Spezia, where there was much inspection of dockyards and of the new ironclads, Duilio and Dandolo; along the Riviera to Genoa, Mentone, and Marseilles, where the party left the yacht on December 13.

Six weeks of the late summer of 1882 were spent in other seas. Leaving Cowes on August 9, the yacht was headed eastward and then north up the coast to the Firth of Forth and Aberdeen, and thence to the coast of Norway. Smith well describes the scenery of the fjords in a letter to his sister Augusta :—

The Fjords, or salt-water lakes, run up many of them 150 miles into the mountains, . . . and it is frequently difficult to see how we can get out of the mountain-locked lake into which we have thrust ourselves.

There is every variety—great softness and beauty in some places, with verdure excelling Devonshire, and a few miles farther on bare, sheer, stern rocks rising out of the water in precipices of 3000 or 4000 feet. At one moment we have vast snow-fields and glaciers, from which the chilled wind comes down to us; a turn of the ship and of the Fjord, and we have the sweet-smelling hay and a timber-covered slope more lovely than the Lauterbrünnen Valley. It has done us all good.”

They afterwards visited Copenhagen and Amsterdam—scenes strangely in contrast with the romantic landscapes they had left behind them. Here is Smith’s impression of Holland, communicated in a letter to his step-daughter, Mrs Codrington :—

*Somewhere on the canal between NIEU DIEP
and AMSTERDAM, Sept. 15, 1882.*

Here we are in Dutchland, with a Dutchman to regulate our movements, and they *are* deliberate. We came in

here by the Texel. Your husband will tell you all about it, but the land is chiefly remarkable because it is usually covered with water. . . . We got into Nieu Diep about 5 P.M. Then came the ceremony of going through the docks, in which we were detained for half an hour while the captain was closeted with the harbour-master, who, I believe, required to be informed of the sex, age, and number of teeth of every person on board. I don't think he inquired after grandchildren. Then we moored for the night, and at 5 a great functionary, a King's Pilot, came on board to take charge of the ship. We started at "Slow," and his first remark was, "It is very fast; it is too fast." The captain wanted to go at half-speed, but he was shocked, and said, "You would wash away the country;" and then he complained "she was too quick with her helm." However, we got away, and my view from the bridge at 5.30 was mist, through which the sun slowly tried to rise. Everything was slow, flat, and quaint to the last degree. Over the watery and green expanse little peat stacks apparently arose, which, as the light became stronger, turned into houses, all exactly alike—tiled, and partially thatched over the tiles. . . . The water became less, and villages and towns appeared. We passed Alkmaar, which is an interesting place with many Churches, and some fine ones. Canals for streets, and the banks of Canals for roads. It is very picturesque, and very interesting to see *once*; but it is quite impossible not to pity people, from one's own point of view, who live below the level of the sea, however well-to-do they may be. And they are very well-to-do, for there are more black and white cattle in the fields than we have seen since we left England. Everything is in plenty except hills, and we passed the only range, and they are called the Camperdown Mountains, for they are quite 100 feet

high in some parts. . . . Seven times have I been interrupted by "The ship aground, sir." The Canal turns always at the narrowest part, and our Pilot stops the engines, so that we have no steerage-way, and go helplessly bow on; but we get off again, and the only mischief done is to the campshedding on the banks.

Then follows a little bit of professional sarcasm on Lord Northbrook and Mr Campbell Bannerman, then First Lord and Secretary to the Admiralty, who, it seems, had not made the usual autumn tour of the dockyards:—

I don't understand Northbrook and Bannerman not going round. It is not politic, at least I think not, but these people are much cleverer than I am, and know intuitively things which I could not realise unless I saw them.

In December of that year the Pandora was lent to Sir Stafford Northcote for a three months' cruise.

In August 1883 Copenhagen was revisited, and the voyage was extended to Cronstadt. The Pandora could not be taken up to St Petersburg, as there is not more than nine feet of water over the bar, but most of the party went there. On 8th September they arrived at Kiel, thence to Rotterdam, and returned to Cowes Roads on 15th.

Thereafter the yacht was again lent to Sir Stafford Northcote.

It would be wearisome to record more about these pleasure cruises, to which Smith used to look ardently forward, in those broiling days when, by sheer exhaustion of legislators, the session of Parliament creeps slowly to a close. But it is not possible to write about the Pandora without mention of Captain Blow, who sailed in her during all the years from 1880 to 1891, and gained the esteem and confidence, not only of Mr Smith and his family, but of all who were guests on board. He tells how Mr Smith knew every man in the crew, even though he had not much personal intercourse with them, and how he liked to have the old hands re-engaged year by year. He speaks with special appreciation of the care which his master always showed that plenty of time should be allowed to get up steam—a point in which some yachtsmen show scant consideration when in a hurry to get under weigh—and of the precautions he took to make arrangements for the mails to meet the yacht at the various places where she touched, so that every man on board should get his letters as punctually as Smith did himself. These may seem trifling points, but it is in trifles that men most surely show consideration for those in their employment. But if he was thus studious of the convenience of the men and careful also to

provide for their amusement, Smith had no indulgence to a man who showed inclination to shirk duty. Once when the yacht was at Antwerp in 1885, a War Office messenger arrived with despatches. The man, being anxious to combine a little sight-seeing with his duty, had taken a return ticket by Harwich, which would have delayed him a couple of days. Smith would not hear of this, and insisted on his going back direct the same way he had come. Captain Blow, like many another good sailor, is not a man of many words, but there is a look in his eyes when he speaks of his old master that tells of the confidence they had in each other. Nor was Smith's confidence misplaced, for in all the years he commanded the Pandora, Captain Blow never encountered a serious mishap, though it is true that in 1880, when Blow was serving as mate, the vessel took the ground at Ergastoli, owing to a confusion in the lights, in Cephalonia, and had to be lightened of 100 tons of coal before she floated again.

Those who have enjoyed the hospitality of the Pandora will surely expect mention to be made here of at least one other official—the steward, Ford, a man of original character, who remained in the yacht to the last, and contributed very greatly to the comfort of all Mr Smith's guests.

In 1887 Mr Smith lent the Pandora to the Baroness Burdett Coutts, in order that she might proceed on her mission of mercy to Baltimore in Ireland. In a letter returning thanks to him for his kindness, the benevolent lady observed :—

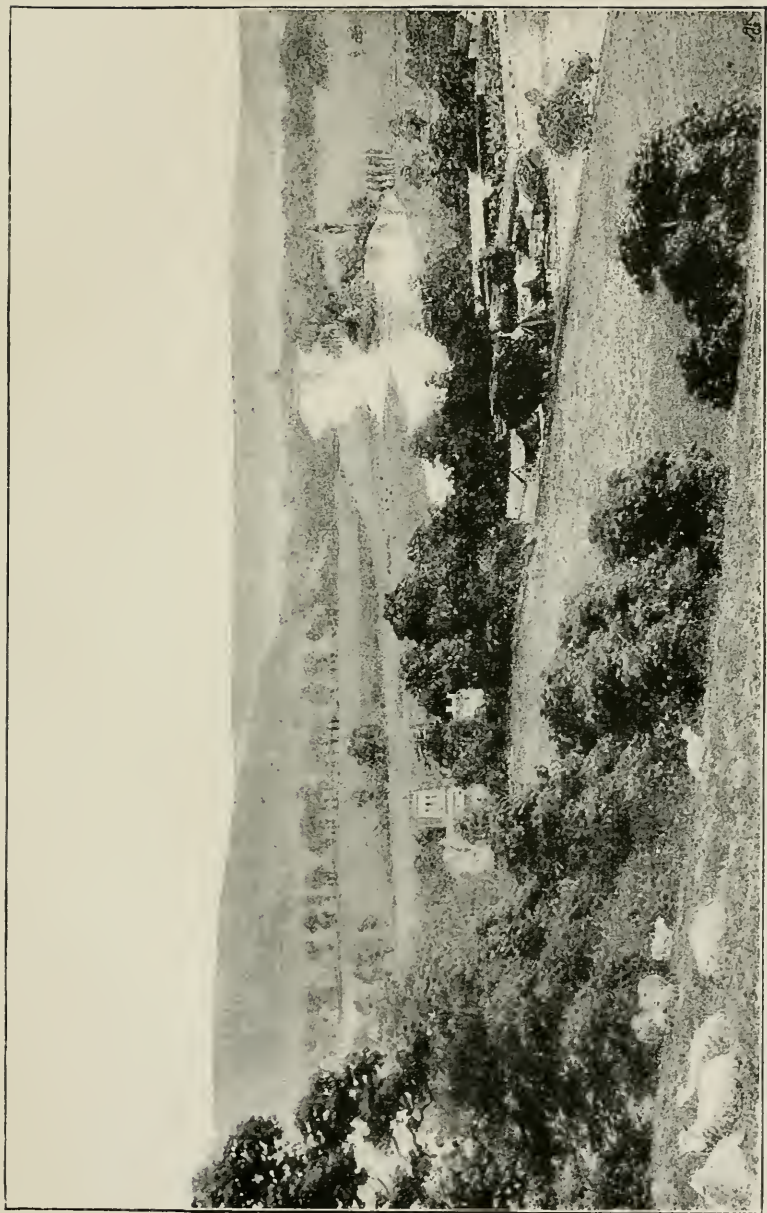
With respect to the main object and results of this visit, there is every reason for congratulation. It is, I fear, a solitary ray of sunshine, but there is some comfort and some satisfaction in a scene of peace and unanimity in this country.

CHAPTER V.

1871-1891.

GREENLANDS—BESIEGED IN THE CIVIL WAR—BOUGHT BY MR SMITH IN 1871—EFFECT OF HIS RESIDENCE ON THE NEIGHBOURHOOD—HIS METHOD IN CHARITY—THE CHURCH OF ST MARY'S, PORTSEA—MISTRUST OF THE SALVATION ARMY—SANITARY IMPROVEMENT OF HAMBLEMEN—MR SMITH BUILDS A HOSPITAL NEAR HENLEY—HOME LIFE AT GREENLANDS—THE GARDEN—REFUSAL TO APPEAR AS A “CELEBRITY AT HOME”—THE LIBRARY—THE PICTURES—PURCHASE OF ESTATES IN SUFFOLK AND DEVONSHIRE.

THERE is no landscape more profoundly tranquil—none more thoroughly English in character—than that which lies on either bank of the river below Henley-on-Thames. Between that town and the village of Hamblemen—distant from each other some four miles, the Thames, flowing northwards first through the well-known Henley reach, bends sharply eastward and sweeps in a wide curve between level meadows, bordered and sheltered on the north by the beech-clad downs of Fawley and Hamblemen. Southwards the



GREENLANDS, FROM THE HILL.

view stretches away over Remenham, banded by heavy hedgerows, to the gently swelling uplands of Wargrave and Ashley. Just where the river-lawns are greenest and the stream spreads itself into its glassiest reach, stands, on the left bank, the modern house of Greenlands. A white building in the Italian style—surrounded by sleepy elms and solemn cedars casting broad swathes of shadow across the velvety turf, and gay with its environment of flower-beds led down to the very edge of the water—there is little in this place to commemorate the noisy conflict which once roared around it for months together. But there are still piled on the terrace some rusty round-shot, which from time to time have been found buried deep in the park and garden, memorials of the long siege sustained in old Greenland House by brave Sir John Doyley, who stood for the King in 1644. Oxford and Wallingford remained staunchly Royalist, but nearer Henley was garrisoned by the Parliamentarians, when, about the New Year, Doyley began to fortify his premises; and the Lenten lilies had not blown before he was closely beleaguered by Major-General Skippen. The house, of which every vestige has long ago disappeared, must have been of considerable strength, for its garrison maintained an obstinate defence. General

Skippen, riding round it one dewy May morning, had his horse shot under him; and Essex wrote to him repeatedly, insisting on the reduction of Greenland, as essential to the safety of his army. In June a message came from the House of Lords to the Commons, setting forth the necessity of the immediate despatch of a regiment or more on foot to join the forces then before Greenland, "and that they might batter it from the other side of the Thames."¹ Later, the Commons sent to London to arrange for more troops being forwarded to reduce Oxford and Greenland House, and the better securing of these counties for Parliament. In fact, on the King's return to Oxford, General Skippen thought it better to draw off his forces before Greenland, and retired to Henley. But in July arrived Major-General Brown, who, planting a battery on the south bank of the river, and sending to London for two siege-pieces and some petards, proceeded to bombard the manor-house. Whitlock notes that thereafter it was "almost beaten about the ears of the garrison."

In the same month of July the siege was again raised by a party from Oxford and Wallingford. General Brown once more retired to Henley, and the Royalist force went back to Oxford, taking with them twenty-nine women, who had been

¹ Whitlock's Memorials.

shut up in Greenland. But no sooner had the Cavaliers disappeared in the summer woodland than General Brown renewed the siege on Sir John Doyley's stronghold, then under command of Colonel Hawkins. This time Brown brought his whole brigade, and renewed the bombardment in such vigorous sort that the gallant Hawkins, standing on a pile of smoking ruins, was fain to sue for terms. He obtained them, and of such a kind as to prove both his own prowess and the value set by the Parliamentary leaders on the house of Greenland, for he and his brave garrison were allowed to march out with the honours of war, prisoners were exchanged, and the victors provided transport for the vanquished as far as Wallingford.

Standing on a summer evening beside the tranquil stream, watching the pleasure-boats floating past and listening to the distant roar of Hambleton lasher—it is difficult to realise that this is the same scene where once the civil conflict raged so fiercely, that the frequent round-shot hurtled where the swallows now skim, and yonder tuneful woodland echoed to hoarse battle-cries and clash of angry steel.

Old Greenland House was levelled with the sward: Sir John Doyley, his resources sadly drained by the expenses of the war, parted

with the estate. After that, it changed hands pretty often, till, in 1871, it was bought by Mr Smith from Mr Marjoribanks.¹ This was the quiet retreat in which the weary man of affairs looked forward to spending the afternoon of life,—this the *angulus ille terrarum* which he set himself to beautify, and enrich with work on the garden, the farm, the woods, and, above all, on the workmen's cottages. He was not one to brook the existence of those terrible contrasts, which are only to be endured by habit, between the dwellings of the rich and poor: if his own house, as befitted his means, was to be beautiful and even luxurious, so much the greater urgency for the cottages of his workmen to be bright and healthy and roomy enough for decorous living. Every human being—ay, and every quadruped too—that worked on his land, should be as comfortably housed and liberally dealt with as patient forethought could ensure. Of course this is something beyond practical farming: a hardworking tenant, with a rent to pay, has to see his way to get back whatever he puts into the pockets of his workmen or down the throats of his beasts; but it was the kindly anxiety of a prosperous man that everything on his ground should be comfortable and well to do.

¹ Created Baron Tweedmouth in 1881.

Smith took special delight in his flock of Sussex Down ewes, and used to listen sympathetically to his shepherd dilating with professional pride on their level backs, well-bred heads, and close ochrey fleeces.

It was not, however, often that Smith spoke familiarly with his servants. As a rule, he was reserved and silent towards them; never rude or hasty, but speaking no more than the occasion required. One day he said to his valet: "I don't speak much to you; my mind is pretty full of other matters, but remember, it is never so full that I cannot listen to anything you want to say to me."

The reposeful purpose of the new owner of Greenlands was, so far as concerned himself, destined to imperfect fulfilment. Public life in the nineteenth century is niggardly in opportunity of retirement for a Cincinnatus, and in addition to the time devoured by the ever-growing business in the Strand, in which Smith continued the leading active partner till 1874, he had, at the time of his settling at Greenlands, been for three years a metropolitan member, and few who have not tried it are able to realise what incessant attention that honourable position demands.

Still, he made it his country home; there his

wife and children lived in the autumn and winter, and thither he betook himself as often and for as long as his parliamentary, commercial, and other engagements would allow. He grew very fond of the place, took a moderately active part in the duties of a magistrate, of the Board of Guardians, and other county business, and seemed to delight in making friends with the clergy in the neighbouring parishes, assisting them in their various schemes, and contributing to the repair or adornment of their churches. To record all that he did in this way during the score of years he lived at Greenlands would take a long time, and would, moreover, be the kind of catalogue which he, of all men, would most have disliked to see in the hands of others. Never was there any one more concerned in deluding his left hand as to the doings of his right, of which no better illustration could be found than the part he took in the building of St Mary's Church at Portsea. The history of his connection with that enterprise affords a sample of his method of patient preliminary inquiry, his dislike of publicity, and his princely liberality when he had satisfied himself that there was good occasion for it.

Admiral Codrington, the husband of Mr Smith's step-daughter, held an appointment at Portsmouth in 1884. Smith heard from Mrs Codrington of



IN THE GROUNDS AT GREENLANDS.

the project formed by Canon Jacob, vicar of Portsea, to reconstruct or rebuild the parish church, and the description which she gave of the locality—a large parish of 26,000 inhabitants, mainly of the industrial order—at once enlisted his sympathy in the scheme. He made the acquaintance of Canon Jacob, and at once gave him a subscription of £500. In doing so, Smith expressed himself to Canon Jacob to the following effect: “I am ready to help you further, but I am anxious that in doing so I should not interfere with local effort nor diminish the local sources of supply. If I am satisfied that your own people are doing their utmost to provide for what is necessary in the parish, you may rely on me to help you to make it a fine church. Let me know whenever you are in want of funds, but do not let my name appear.” After that understanding had been thoroughly established between them, Canon Jacob had no reason to complain of the conditions. He and Smith became warm friends, but their interviews were conducted under clandestine precautions. So anxious was Smith to preserve the mystery which shrouded the “friend” whose cheques were mentioned so frequently in the subscription-lists, that when he called on Canon Jacob he would not even ring the door-bell, but walked straight into the vicar’s study.

From first to last his donations to the building fund amounted to £29,000, out of a total expenditure of £42,000.

The secret was well kept, and Canon Jacob and Mr Smith had many a laugh over incidents in connection with it. One evening Smith walked into the vicar's library shortly after he had sent him a cheque for £15,000. Said he—

“I saw Ryder¹ this morning, and he said to me, ‘I hear Jacob has received a promise of £15,000 for his building fund from some rich fellow. Now I don't want to discourage him, but I don't think it would be safe for him to act on it, unless good security is given him, and so I have told him.’ I told Ryder,” Smith went on, “that I had heard the same thing, and given Jacob exactly the same advice.”

Smith frequently visited the building during its progress, and derived much pleasure from the work. The church, which was designed by Sir Arthur Blomfield, is a fine example of the Perpendicular style—a form of Gothic which, though it does not satisfy the sense of most architectural critics, has at least this distinction, that it is exclusively English, being the form through which ecclesiastical architecture descended in our country when, on the Continent and even in Scotland,

¹ Admiral Sir A. P. Ryder.

it assumed the Flamboyant manner. When the building was finished, Canon Jacob went over it with Smith.

“I am simply delighted,” said the latter. “I don’t know enough about architecture to criticise, but I am thoroughly pleased with what has been done.”

During the intercourse which this building brought about between them, Canon Jacob had many opportunities of becoming acquainted with Smith’s view of charity in general, and the precautions he observed before contributing to any scheme. When he was satisfied as to the object aimed at and the means of attaining it, he used to give with no sparing hand, and largely in directions which never were and never will be known.

With one philanthropic scheme which made much stir during his later years—General Booth’s—he would have nothing to do. The excitement and vehemence of the Salvation Army were foreign to all his religious instincts, and, as a business man, he would not be induced to contribute to a fund in the absence of good security that it should be rightly administered.

The accomplishment of some of the chief improvements in the neighbourhood of Greenlands was rendered possible by means of Smith’s liberal

assistance. In the secluded village of Hambleton, though it is not actually on the property that was his, his name will long be affectionately remembered. Nestling deep in a narrow green valley opening from the Thames, it is just one of those immemorial little communities where life slips uneventfully from generation to generation, not without its patient tragedy, yet undisturbed by noisy crime — with quiet enjoyment of such comforts as may be gathered in modest homes, but without much splendour of expectation on the narrow horizon which bounds it. In such a neighbourhood, he who would confer benefits must be content to do so by patient stealth. Undiscriminating liberality is more picturesque than indifference to the wants of a poor neighbourhood, but it is hardly less mischievous in effect than the ungracious spirit shown by a rich but penurious individual at Bramley in Yorkshire, of whom it is told that, on being asked to subscribe to rebuilding the wall of the parish churchyard, he refused, observing that there was really no use for a wall of any sort, “because nobody outside the churchyard was anxious to get in, and those who were in already couldn’t come out.”

In Hambleton irregular rows of dwellings clustered closely round a crowded God’s-acre, —too closely and too crowded for safety. The



LYCH GATE, HAMBLEDEN.

wells, so picturesquely set in garden-plots, were fatally tainted, and, as often happens, fever and “dirt diseases” used to be more prevalent in this sequestered dale than in many a city slum. But there is nothing more sure to stir suspicion and resistance in a quiet community than a proposal to close an ancient burial-ground. Folk cling passionately to the plot of ground where, as in Hambleton, they have been accustomed to lay their dead since the days of the Heptarchy, where—

“Beneath these rugged elms, that yew-tree’s shade,
Where heaves the turf in many a mould’ring heap,
Each in his narrow cell for ever laid,
The rude forefathers of the hamlet sleep.”

Happily the incumbent whom Smith found at Hambleton when he became a parishioner, the late Rev. W. H. Ridley, honorary canon of Christ Church, was not only an able and zealous pastor, but one with whom he was able to work hand in hand in intimate friendship; and by acting in concert with him and the lord of the manor, he was able to assist in many changes and improvements, both in the church and its surroundings. Opposition having been successfully conciliated, the first requisite to the health of Hambleton was effected—namely, shutting up the old churchyard, and enclosing a new cemetery

outside the village, for which Mr Smith gave the ground. He cordially co-operated in a scheme whereby extensive repairs were carried out in the fabric of the parish church and the tower was rebuilt, in which were hung afresh the old peal of bells. Their melodious chimes, echoing among the hanging beechwoods, and overpowering

“The drowsy tinklings of the distant fold,”

call to mind a bygone state of society, for the tenor bell was won at cards by an eighteenth-century incumbent of Hambleden from the rector of a neighbouring parish, who had previously staked and lost to him all that he possessed.

In spite, however, of the sanitary improvements effected in the village, repeated outbreaks of diphtheria, and typhoid and scarlet fever, continued to take place in the neighbourhood, and the difficulty of isolating infectious cases was the subject of much concern to Mr Smith, till, in 1889, he resolved to build a hospital to supply the want. Mr Mackenzie of Fawley Court having granted a suitable and valuable site in the Fair Mile, near Henley, buildings were erected, with separate blocks, airy corridors, and ample offices, under the direction of Mr Keith Young. It was thoroughly furnished and equipped with every instrument of comfort

and relief, including a large ambulance, and the whole must have cost the donor not less than £11,000, but he did not live to see it completed.

The part Smith had taken in educational legislation, and his experience on the London School Board, inclined him to take a practical interest in school matters in Henley and Hambleden. He became one of the governing body of Henley Royal Grammar-School, and exerted himself in preparing and promoting a scheme to adapt that decaying institution to the wants of a rural neighbourhood, rather than bolster it up as a seat of classical learning. The Charity Commissioners stepped in, and taking the matter out of the hands of the governors, brought out a scheme almost exactly on the lines proposed by Mr Smith, whose last appearance among the new governing body was in 1891, when they met to inaugurate the reformed constitution.

While he attended in these and other respects to the wants of his poorer neighbours in the country, he by no means neglected the beauty and comfort of his own home. He added very largely to the original house at Greenlands, and delighted in finding his children and children's children assembled there with their friends when, at the end of a hard week in Parliament and a Saturday sitting of the Cabinet, he escaped to

spend a quiet Sunday among the deep woods beside the gentle stream. How often he longed for such rest, how gratefully he enjoyed it when it came, finds frequent expression in his letters.

One Sunday in 1889, being detained in London, he writes to one of his daughters :—

At luncheon at the Admiralty yesterday we were discussing our several ideas of rest, and G. Hamilton and Goschen both declared in favour of being allowed to stay at home on Sunday mornings when their wives went to church. I said I almost enjoyed the quietness and rest in the midst of work of being alone in the house, when I was nearly tired out at the end of a session.

Those who visited at Greenlands remember how smoothly everything went.¹ Some may think that making life in a country house agreeable to guests is merely a question of expenditure, and that nothing is easier than for a rich man with a good house to be a good host. But even the

¹ After a visit to Greenlands in 1885, where there had been a garden party, Dr (now Sir Henry) Acland wrote to Smith : “And now, what am I to say concerning the last three days? Well, to a quiet worn creature of threescore years and ten such an occasion, in such a scene, is certainly a revelation of a new sense.

‘Tears such as tender fathers shed,
For joy to think when they are dead
Their sons shall find the good their friend.’

Those words best express the state of mind I was in while wandering in all your splendid hospitalities, that veiled, but not concealed, the peace and family strength that reigned firm beneath them.”



A FAVOURITE PEEP OF THE THAMES.

wealthiest are not always successful in the art of entertaining—especially those who have made wealth for themselves. The remarkable feature in the Greenlands *ménage* was the absence alike of fuss or ostentation : everything went as evenly as on board a man-of-war ; and it is only fair to say that this was owing in large measure to the fact that Mr Smith's servants, like the officers of his yacht, remained many years in his employ. Both here and in Grosvenor Place people used to contrast the dinner-parties favourably with the interminable feasts which some well-disposed Amphitryons, especially of the political type, seem to think inseparable from right hospitality.¹ Everything of wine or food kind was the best that money could buy, but there was a sort of modesty and graceful measure in their use. Indeed the only respect in which his table approached extravagance was in the display of flowers. These were certainly supplied lavishly, but they were all home-grown, for their owner had spared no expense on his gardens. In the

¹ Touching the political dinner-parties which Smith used to give in Grosvenor Place on Wednesday evenings during the session of Parliament, it must be well remembered by many who attended them how careful he was to arrange them so that the younger members of the Conservative party should be brought into easy acquaintance with their leaders. It requires but a slight familiarity with political affairs to know how greatly this contributes to the pleasure and harmony of parliamentary life.

comparatively limited extent of the grounds at Greenlands—the flower-garden occupies but a narrow wedge of land between the highroad and the river—a staff of thirty men were employed. There is a very large range of glass-houses, in the planning and management of which Mr Smith used to take much delight, and a constant supply of choicest flowers and fruit was the result. His favourite flower (it is the fashion to record the preference of statesmen for certain flowers—Disraeli's primrose, the third Napoleon's violet, Boulanger's carnation, are instances in point) was lily of the valley, and means were employed to ensure a long succession of that plant, from the earliest forced blooms in January to the latest in July, artificially retarded by being grown on beds of ice.

Horticulturists may find some interest in the fact, that in the whole range of the vineries at Greenlands there is not a single specimen of the "Gros Colman" grape—a deserved favourite for its profuse yield, beautiful clusters of large raisins, and unsurpassed keeping qualities, which generally prevail to counterbalance its deficiency in flavour.

If there was one part of his possessions in regard to which Smith used to yield to that weakness of country gentlemen which Disraeli,

in one of his novels, calls the "Sunday-afternoon-pride-of-proprietorship," it was his garden; for though he was without technical knowledge of the art of horticulture, he enjoyed the fragrance and beauty of flowers so thoroughly that he loved to bring his friends to do the same. His favourite place for a confidential after-dinner talk with a friend was the large conservatory opening off the drawing-room, and the love which he never lost for music used to be gratified at the same time by the strains from the organ, played by one of his daughters in an adjoining room.

It was a thoroughly peaceful home, and the only drawback to Smith's complete enjoyment of it was his frequent absence, caused by the incessant and ever-increasing calls of public duty. The perfect harmony which always endured among the members of this family was owing in large measure to the gentle nature of its head. Weary, harassed, suffering in body and anxious in mind as he often was (for he was very far from possessing the excellent constitution and easy temperament of his old idol Palmerston), neither wife, nor child, nor colleague, nor friend, nor servant ever heard him speak a hasty or angry word. Naturally reticent, he was yet always ready to receive the confidence of others, and there was at no time between

him and any of his children that freezing awe which sometimes hedges a father and makes him the last to whom his children turn in their sorrows or perplexities, small or great. And, in return, the warmth of his affection was never chilled by their neglect, nor his heart saddened by their faults or mistakes, so that a few weeks before his death he was able to write in all truth to Miss Giberne, "What cause for thankfulness have we not got! I am sixty-six, and have no sorrow with any one of my children." There was no difference in degree in the affection that bound him to each member of the family. Thus in 1882 he wrote on his birthday to his step-daughter, Mrs Codrington, "So long as I have the warm affection of wife and children, birthdays will be happy; but life is not worth living without love."¹ Even in the closing weeks of a weary session, when his family had moved to Greenlands and he remained to struggle through the drowsy dog-days alone, he never failed to write each night to Mrs Smith from his place in the House. Love-letters have often been penned amid strange environment—from dungeons and garrets, from towering seas, from Arctic wastes and torrid African sands; but surely none were ever

¹ The Princesse de Belgiojoso is made to utter exactly the same sentiment in somewhat different words—"I cannot imagine what joy there can be in living when the eyes of others no longer look love into ours."

more tender or more true than those written by Smith to his wife from the Treasury Bench, amid the din of debate or the languor of obstructive talk. One is tempted to quote some of their simple, fervent language, if it were but to show that, in spite of many sorrowful instances to the contrary, public men may foster and enjoy the most delicate private affection, and the most devoted politician may remain perfect as a husband and father. Ugly stories about those in high places spread quickly among a public over-ready to believe evil of those in authority: it would be well to put in evidence some of these words of pure and lasting devotion, but it is not possible to parade the innermost feelings of one who has so lately gone from among us. Nevertheless, a sentence or two from Smith's letters to his wife may be chosen, showing the spirit of all the rest. In 1887:—

I have had a very nice letter from the Queen, which I will show you to-morrow evening if, as I hope, I am able to get down to you, and this must come to you as my first greeting on the Anniversary of that happy day when we became one. . . . God has blessed us, and we do owe very much to Him, for all our trials have brought us closer to each other and to Him, and every day I realise more and more of the strength and guidance which you ask and help me to gain. . . . The debate is going on in a dull way, and Childers is now speaking, but our Irish Attorney-General, Mr Holmes, made a very good speech indeed in opening.

Again, in August of the following year :—

Here I am sitting listening to Arthur Balfour, who is answering Mr J. Morley, and I have ears for him and thoughts for you and my very dear ones at home. . . . I hope we shall get our votes all right to-night, and that I may get away to-morrow by the 6.20.

Another letter, written in the same week as the last, bears evidence that however ready Smith always was to welcome visitors to his home, he was exceedingly jealous of a betrayal of its privacy. Readers of “society” journals must be familiar with the series of “Celebrities at Home” which have been continued for many years in the ‘World’ newspaper. The editor wrote to Smith asking him to give him a sitting for one of these pen-portraits, and alluding to some half-dozen of his colleagues in the Cabinet who had already done so. The reply to this letter is characteristic :—

10 DOWNING STREET, WHITEHALL,
9th Aug. 1888.

“MY DEAR MR YATES,—I am very sensible of the valuable services you have rendered to the Party, and I would gladly do anything in my power to recognise them, but I have almost a superstitious horror of any publicity in matters concerning the private life of my Family.

Everybody is welcome to see everything I have got, to walk about my place, and to enjoy it as much as I do

when I can get away from my work, but I am most anxious to preserve the inviolability of my home.

Pray forgive me for this fancy.—Yours very truly,

W. H. SMITH.¹

In the general amusements of a country gentleman Smith took a moderate part. He was never what his namesake, Sydney Smith, termed a “pheasant-minded man,” but his preserves were well stocked with game, and he liked to provide sport for his guests, and sometimes took a gun himself.² But the impression generally left on the minds of visitors was that

¹ It is not often possible to turn the tables on an interviewer—least of all if he represents an American journal—but Smith once succeeded very well in doing so. The proprietor of one of the principal New York dailies being in London, wrote to request an interview with the First Lord of the Treasury. Smith had minuted the letter, “Express regret,” when he changed his mind, and said to his secretary—“No, let him come; he can give me the information I want about the municipal institutions of New York.” (The Local Government Bill was under consideration in the House of Commons at the time.) An appointment was made, the interview took place, and for a quarter of an hour the great journalist was kept busy answering Mr Smith’s questions. Then the next appointment was announced, the visitor was bowed out, and it flashed on him that for once a Britisher had outwitted a Yankee. “I guess,” he remarked to the private secretary as he picked up his hat,—“I guess that Mister Smith has interviewed *me*.”

² In this respect he was more effective than his friend and colleague, Northcote, whose short sight prevented him from being even a fair shot. I once happened to be staying in a country house in Scotland where Sir Stafford was also visiting. After breakfast our host was arranging for our amusement, and turning to Northcote said, “Do you shoot, Sir Stafford?” “*Intransitively* I do,” was the reply.

their host was inclined rather to silence than to conversation ; that although he was ready to listen sympathetically to what others had to say, his own mind was too fully occupied with his work to be curious about the concerns of others. He had no time for "fads" or amateur pursuits, and never showed any disposition to trespass on the province of science or literature. It is possible that early and close concentration upon business had robbed his faculties of some of that elasticity which generally causes men who are eminent in one department of activity to make excursions into the domain of others. On the other hand, his thoroughly practical nature may have convinced him that there is sound sense in the adage, "The cobbler to his last and the gunner to his linstock," and that no satisfaction is derived from handling too many irons.

Some evidence of a man's character and tastes is sure to be found in his bookshelves, and thus Smith's busy life, his practical application to affairs, and his ample means, all found reflection in his library. A glance round the room is enough to show that here was no haunt of a book-lover or book-hunter : for the weaknesses of the first its owner enjoyed too little leisure ; for those of the second he had drawn from his hurried and unsatisfactory education no con-

suming passion. Nevertheless there are books, several thousands of them, well cared for and well ordered: books of modern travel and useful information predominate, but fiction and poetry are liberally represented also; and the fastidious bibliophile can gratify his passion with the contents of a case, consisting of sumptuously bound classics, in folio and quarto, mainly purchased at the sale of the celebrated Syston Park collection.

But the luxury which Smith allowed himself most latitude in indulging was the purchase of good pictures. He made no claim to a discriminating knowledge of art; in making his purchases he relied very much on the judgment of Mr Woods, a partner in the well-known firm of Messrs Christie, Manson, & Woods. Under the guidance of that gentleman, he acquired some beautiful works of art—notably a ploughing scene, by Rosa Bonheur, which hangs on the staircase at 3 Grosvenor Place, and two exquisite portraits by Romney, of the sisters Ramus (one of whom became Lady Day and the other Madame de Noailles), now at Greenlands.

He was also a good friend to living artists, and commissioned some of the most noted of them to paint the portraits of some of his colleagues in the Cabinet. In the dining-room at Grosvenor Place there hang likenesses of Lord Iddesleigh

painted by Long, of Lord Cross by H. Herkomer, of Lord John Manners by Oules, of Mr Arthur Balfour by Alma Tadema, and of Lord Beaconsfield and Lord Salisbury by Sir John Millais. Concerning the last-named, Millais wrote to Smith in 1882, while the picture was in progress : "I have found him more difficult than most of the portraits I have painted." In spite of this difficulty, the portrait is admitted to be one of the best that accomplished artist has ever achieved.

Besides these, there are hung in other rooms excellent examples of Turner, Copley Fielding, Cooke, David Cox, Stansfield, Landseer, and other masters ; and Mr Smith's own portrait by Richmond is in the morning-room.

In addition to his Greenlands estate, Mr Smith invested upwards of £450,000 in the purchase of land in Suffolk and Devonshire. In the former county he bought about 6000 acres in various parcels between 1877 and 1891. The Rewe and Silverton estate near Exeter, extending to about 900 acres, was acquired at different dates between 1876 and 1889, and large sums were spent here in rebuilding cottages in the village of Rewe. Lastly, in 1890 and 1891, the Moretonhampstead estate, a tract of rough pasture on the edge of Dartmoor, was bought from the Earl of Devon.



CHAPTER VI.

1885.

DILEMMA OF THE GOVERNMENT—FALL OF KHARTOUM—NORTH-COTE'S MOTION OF CENSURE—FIRST APPLICATION OF CLOSURE—THE "RAPIER AND ROSETTE" SECTION OF CONSERVATIVES—HOSTILE ATTITUDE OF RUSSIA—VOTE OF CREDIT FOR £11,000,000—MR CHILDERS'S LAST BUDGET—DEFEAT AND RESIGNATION OF MINISTERS—LORD SALISBURY FORMS A CABINET—MR SMITH BECOMES SECRETARY OF STATE FOR WAR—THE "CABINET OF CARETAKERS"—THE GENERAL ELECTION—ATTITUDE OF THE IRISH PARTY—MR GLADSTONE ACCEPTS HOME RULE.

THE crisis is becoming so serious, and the complications with which this country is beset in all parts of the world are so menacing, that the incapacity displayed by the Cabinet in its external relations is becoming a national danger. Much is forgiven to men who have a reputation; but in face of continual and glaring proofs of failure to conduct the most ordinary affairs, the country may speedily be driven to the conclusion that there would at least be no harm in trying what can be done by persons with less high-sounding names. . . . Whatever the powers of the men who now compose the Government, they are collectively cursed with an infirmity of will and a blindness

to facts which are rapidly involving the country in difficulties and dangers such as the most powerful State may shrink from encountering.

These sentences, taken from a leading article in the 'Times'—a journal which up to that date had uniformly given independent support to whatever Government happened to be in power—were ominous of the general displeasure entertained at the beginning of 1885 on account of the way the affairs of this country were being conducted. The outcome of five years' administration of foreign affairs by Lord Granville had been to leave Great Britain almost without a friend among the great Powers. Italy, it is true, had been conciliated by the conclusion of a treaty under which England agreed to favour that country in the formation of a colony at Massowah, in the Red Sea, and in the annexation of territory on the west coast of Africa, in return for which "Italy would assist England in her enterprises in Egypt, and would raise her voice on behalf of England in the European Council for the settling of the Egyptian question, on every occasion when England should appeal to her." But France was still malcontent with the continued occupation of Egypt by British troops. Russia had persisted in pushing forward her advance-posts towards the Afghan

frontier in spite of Lord Granville's remonstrance, and in contemptuous disregard of treaties; and the steady concentration of troops and warlike material in the direction of Merv seemed intended as a direct menace to Great Britain. Lastly, a state of angry tension had developed itself between the Foreign Departments of Great Britain and Germany in regard to certain events connected with the development of Prince Bismarck's policy of Colonisation in Africa and New Guinea, and the conclusion of a treaty between the German Emperor and the King of Samoa.¹

But a still deeper shade of gloom fell on the outlook of Ministers by the announcement, in a telegram from Sir Charles Wilson on February 5, that Khartoum, which General Gordon had been holding against the Mahdi for ten months, had fallen, and the Government had to endure the bitter shame of having delayed succour to

¹ Bismarck, addressing the German Parliament on March 2, gave blunt expression to the irritation engendered by Lord Granville's mode of conducting business. "We have received," he said, "since the summer of 1884, no less than 128 English despatches, containing altogether 700 or 800 pages. We did not receive so much from all the other foreign Governments together in the twenty-three years I have been Foreign Minister. Every Nation and Government has the right to do business in the manner it considers useful; but a foreign policy chiefly made up of printed and published notes, sometimes written in order favourably to influence your own Parliament, entails the danger of writing somewhat to impress Parliament and not exclusively the foreign Governments."

a gallant officer till it was too late. The Prime Minister only deepened the disgrace of himself and his colleagues when, on the opening of Parliament on February 19, he tried to palliate it by declaring that "General Gordon contentedly forbore—indeed, more than contentedly, he determinedly forbore—to make use of the means of personal safety which were at all times open to him." The expression of displeasure with which these words were received by the House was so intense, that Mr Gladstone withdrew them; but the impression remained that an unmerited slight had been put upon Gordon's devoted service. On a vote of censure moved by Sir Stafford Northcote, in terms all too mild to satisfy the general feeling among Conservatives, the Government narrowly escaped overthrow by a majority of 14 votes—302 to 288.¹

The first application of the new closure was made during this debate. On precedence being

¹ Smith had written to Northcote on February 22, endeavouring to convey to him the dissatisfaction among the Tories at the terms of his resolution, and hinting at the necessity for more vigour in attack: "There is a feeling amongst our friends that very plain, strong speaking is necessary in this debate. They say our resolution is deficient in force, and that the country demands almost passionate action. I tell you this for what it is worth. I think I recoil from extremes instinctively; but the condition of affairs is so very serious that, come what may, I think it is the duty of men to speak out and to say what they think."

asked for the vote of censure on a private members' night, February 24, the Home Rulers prolonged their resistance so far as to induce the Speaker to declare that "he gathered that it was the evident sense of the House that the question be now put." On a division being taken, most of the Conservatives walked out, which nearly caused the failure of the motion, for it was only carried by 207 votes to 46; and the rule provided that where the minority exceeded 40, the majority voting for the closure must exceed 200.

The disheartening effect of disunion among the Ministerialists had a remarkable counterpart at this time among the ranks of the Opposition. Dissatisfaction towards Northcote's somewhat timid leadership was enhanced by comparison with the brilliant onslaughts led by Lord Randolph Churchill against the Government policy, not only in the House of Commons, but on platforms throughout the country. This feeling found pretty plain utterance at a meeting of the Conservative party held at the Carlton on February 24, and developed into something like open revolt on March 17, when, in discussing the Redistribution of Seats Bill, Sir Michael Hicks Beach stated that he was entirely unable to agree with the line his leader had taken in

supporting the Government's proposal to increase the number of members of the House, and led the "rapier and rosette" party of the Conservatives into the lobby against him.

This disaffection found more explicit expression in a letter to the 'Times' on March 19, wherein Mr Bartley,¹ who had resigned the head agency of the Conservative party, explained his reasons for doing so.

Simple criticism, obstruction, mild platitudes, and abuse [ran this candid document], though they may pass in quiet times, will not now form an Opposition which can command the respect and confidence of the country. In critical times such as these, the leaders should announce and publicly advocate the firm, decided, and patriotic policy they would substitute for the feebleness of the Government.

This, and much more like it, was plainly directed against Northcote's generalship. The peaceable, cultivated country gentleman was not one to inspire confidence when desperate fighting against heavy odds was to be done, and no one knew this better than Smith himself, who knew also what serious warnings his friend and colleague had received about the state of his health. Nevertheless, neither by word nor sign did he show the slightest wavering in his loyalty

¹ Now M.P. for North Islington.

to Northcote; and though secretly stimulating him to more spirited action, Smith never shrank from sharing the obloquy which the impetuous Fourth Party poured on the bourgeois placemen who sat on the front Opposition bench.

Meanwhile negotiations with the Russian Government on the Afghan frontier question had been laboriously progressing till, on April 8, came news which seemed to put the maintenance of peace out of the question. General Komaroff had attacked and routed a body of Afghan troops with heavy loss. Smith describes the prevalent anxiety in letters to his wife :—

HOUSE OF COMMONS, *April 9.*

The news this afternoon is very serious indeed—much more so than any I have heard for a long time. It looks very much as if Russia has played a deliberately treacherous part, and in a contemptuous, defiant manner. I am afraid we have embarked on a very serious war, which will task all the resources of the country.

10th April.

We are all in a state of deep concern. There is no excitement, no alarm, but just that gravity which men exhibit when they feel great events are occurring. There is no fresh news this morning, and I hardly expect to hear anything now before Monday; but I am very glad we did not go away, for if we had I should have felt very uneasy and very selfish. . . . I am, as you may suppose, rather busy and rather anxious, but I trust all will go well with us this evening.

Mr Gladstone described to the House what had taken place in a tone and terms which made a deep impression on all who heard him :—

The House will not be surprised when I say, speaking with measured words in circumstances of great gravity, that to us, upon the statements I have recited, this attack bears the appearance of an unprovoked aggression.

Little did the House of Commons or the country understand what lay behind the Prime Minister's speech. Conveying, as it undoubtedly did, a firm determination to stand by our treaty engagements to the Afghans, and resist encroachment upon our Indian frontier, Mr Gladstone was cheered to the echo from every part of the House. It was not till several weeks later, after the Vote of Credit for £11,000,000 had been asked for and obtained, that it became known that at the very moment he had uttered these brave words, he had been conscious that the British Commissioner, Sir Peter Lumsden, had been recalled, and that at the same time as the Russian Government, who knew how to encourage faithful service, were sending out a sword of honour to General Komaroff.

The Redistribution Bill having been read a second time in the House of Lords, it was generally understood that the remaining business was to be got through in time for an early dis-

solution of Parliament. But there was an unexpected fate awaiting Mr Gladstone's Administration. The Budget of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr Childers, provided for an increase in the duties on beer and spirits, a proposal to which Sir Michael Hicks Beach moved a hostile amendment. This was carried against the Government by a majority of 12 votes, and on June 12 the Prime Minister announced that the Ministry had tendered their resignation to the Queen. Next day her Majesty telegraphed from Balmoral accepting the resignation, and sent for the Marquis of Salisbury, who, returning on June 15, began the difficult task of forming a Cabinet. The difficulty he had to encounter was twofold, for not only would the remaining business of the session, including a new Budget, have to be transacted in face of a hostile majority, but the Tory revolt against Sir Stafford Northcote had to be dealt with. This last was accentuated by an incident which took place in the House of Commons on the very day of Lord Salisbury's return from Balmoral. Mr Gladstone that evening proposed that the House should take into consideration the Lords' amendments on the Redistribution of Seats Bill, and in doing so he received the support of Northcote and the "official" Opposition. But the Fourth Party

resisted the consideration of contentious matter during the interregnum. Sir Michael Hicks Beach, to the surprise of many, threw his weight into the scale of Lord Randolph Churchill, and voted with him in the minority of 35 against 333. The significance of this numerically trifling secession from Northcote's leading consisted in the fact that it contained the combative section of the Tory party, whom it had been sought to classify by the ridiculously paradoxical title of Tory Democrats, and the effect of it was manifest in the formation of the new Ministry by the translation of Northcote to the House of Lords, with the title of Earl of Iddesleigh and the office of First Lord of the Treasury, the appointment of Beach as Chancellor of the Exchequer, and the admission, *per saltum*, of Lord Randolph to the Cabinet as Secretary of State for India.

Smith's services undoubtedly warranted the expectation that he would be offered high office, but the domestic condition of the Conservative party made him quite prepared to be left out in the cold. His letters to his daughter Emily at this time give an almost consecutive account of events:—

June 9.

I have been down to the House to hear Gladstone move the adjournment until Friday, "as the Cabinet had thought

it their duty to submit a humble communication to the Queen, the nature of which he did not feel at liberty to disclose," but which meant the Government had resigned. It has come very quickly indeed; much more suddenly than I expected, but I fancy the Government themselves rather look for it as a relief from their troubles. . . . I suppose by the time you return a government may be in course of formation, and I may or may not be in it. I shall not put myself forward for it; but I shall take it if it comes and if I like the berth.

June 10.

I have no news and little gossip to tell you. . . . I have seen some of the Ministers walking and driving, and they all appear to be in roaring spirits at their escape from the intolerable position in which they found themselves.

June 11.

I have had a talk with two or three men to-day. At one time I did not think I should be in the new Conservative Cabinet if one is formed, as room must be found for two or three new men, and I am far from being a ready debater, but it does seem now more probable that I shall be included. I pity the man who has to form the new Government, but he must cast aside all personal feeling, and make the best piece of machinery that he can for the sake of the country, which really is in a bad way I fear. . . .

June 13.

Nothing settled yet, so far as I know, but rumours of all kinds are flying about, with the foundation of the inner consciousness of the rumour maker.

I have been hard pressed, however, this morning, for, as we were at the Queen's ball last night, I would not

have breakfast until ten this morning, and from that time until now I have had a succession of visitors. . . .

. . . I ought to have gone to Mr Strutt's organ party at Brixton, but as I have to dine at the Trinity House on Tower Hill at seven, and to propose prosperity to the Corporation, and the health of H.R.H. the Master, I shall have a fair day's work.

June 14.

I was at the Trinity House grand dinner last night, with the Duke of Edinburgh in the chair, as Master. The Prince of Wales, Prince George of Wales, the Duke of Cambridge, and Prince Edward were there. The speakers were the two princes, the Duke of Cambridge, Sir Stafford Northcote, Lord Northbrook, Harcourt, Lord Derby, and myself—so we were judiciously sandwiched. It was a very pleasant party, but droll from the singular relations in which we stood to each other side by side—one set out and the other set not in.

CARLTON CLUB, June 16.

I have come down here to get the news, for I heard nothing from anybody during the morning which *was* news. . . . — came in this morning, looking very much disturbed and anxious. He was surprised, I think, to find that I was taking things very coolly, and going out for a walk with the girls. . . . I am still very uncertain if I shall have office at all, although many people say I shall, but I shall not be at all sorry to be left out of any combination at present. A position of greater freedom and less responsibility will be very far from disagreeable to me. By 12 to-morrow, when we meet again at Arlington Street, I suppose I shall know something decisive; and as I know you will be curious to hear, I will telegraph to the Pandora at Falmouth.

How perfectly sincere Smith was in these expressions of indifference to personal advancement is proved by a letter which earlier in the same year, February 22, he had written to Northcote in view of the possibility of the Opposition being called to office. It referred to the imminence of that time when moderate and earnest men of all parties, actuated by a loftier principle than merely to

"Pursue the triumph and partake the gale,"

should draw together in the formation of a Constitutional party. This, ever since the death of Palmerston, had been Smith's chief hope for the future of his party, to realise which he was perfectly willing to sacrifice his own public career :—

I have not taken any step with regard to Goschen, and I shall not do so. It is for you and Salisbury to consider whether the circumstances of the times require that an effort should be made to unite all strong men in the endeavour to save the country. . . . Goschen has weight in the country, if not in the House, and if one of the difficulties in approaching him was to make room in the Cabinet for him, and perhaps another, I am perfectly ready to stand aside altogether, and to give you from the back benches all the help I can to bring things round. We have a very dark and stormy future before us, and no personal interest or personal ambition ought to stand in the way of doing the best that is possible.

But Smith's old colleagues knew too well his

value to entertain this offer. He was appointed Secretary of State for War, his old post at the Admiralty being filled by Lord George Hamilton. The contrast afforded by Smith's pacific personal

THE IDEAL.



Fancy German Portrait of General Sir Smith, the British Secretary of State for War.

appearance and staid demeanour to the formidable attributes of his new office proved irresistible to the pungent but not unfriendly satire of 'Punch.'¹

¹ Messrs Bradbury & Agnew, publishers of 'Punch,' have kindly consented to the reproduction of these caricatures, which were produced at the time by Mr Harry Furniss.

My office [he wrote to Miss Giberne] is nominally superior to the Admiralty, but I should have preferred the old post. I have taken, however, that which the Chief thought best for me and for the Government. We have great responsibilities before us, and I can only hope

THE REAL.



*The Reality—
W. H. Smith, Esq., War Office.*

and trust that we may have wisdom and strength enough to do our work to the advantage of the country. If it were not that men and things are in the hands of a higher power, I should be inclined to despond as to the future; but with that sense of unseen strength, I hope that all will come well for our country.

The sarcastic comments of the Radical press

on the alleged ultra-aristocratic composition of the "Cabinet of Caretakers," as it was called, formed a curious counterpart to the jibes of Tory newspapers just thirty years previously, when in 1855 Lord Palmerston admitted only one "Mr"—and he, too, a Mr Smith¹—into his Cabinet. On that occasion a poem was circulated in which the Prime Minister, in addressing his colleagues, was made to begin every paragraph with "My Lords and Mr Smith"; and another squib was as follows, in reference to Lord Palmerston having declared in a speech that "never was the vessel of State manned by a nobler crew":—

"Cease, ye rude and boisterous railers,
Do not dare our crew contemn;
Manned with such patrician sailors,
Our good ship the tide must stem.
A jaunty Viscount is our skipper,
A Duke and Marquis are her mates,
Three Earls do serve on board this clipper,
Four Sirs, and all of them first-rates.
Two Barons and another Viscount,
Duke Bedford's brother, and therewith
One single commoner can I count—
The lord-like looking Mr Smith."

The new Ministry met Parliament for the first time on July 6, and set their hand to the heavy work which had to be transacted before prorogation.

¹ The late Lord Lyneden.

I have been sitting [writes Smith to his wife half an hour after midnight on July 27] on the bench since 4.15, without moving from it for more than twenty minutes to get some soup and some cold meat, but I have got all my votes, and got them well. However, I really could not write to you, as I had to speak or to watch what other men were saying all the time, and now I seize the first moment to send a line to you, but it will only be for the second post.

But Parliament showed how it can transact business when it is in the mood for it. The new Budget, the Indian Budget, and the whole of the Votes in Supply, were finished within six weeks; and on August 14 that House of Commons which Mr Bright had once declared to be “the best ever returned,” sat for the last time to receive the Queen’s message proroguing Parliament.

The autumn of 1885 is not one likely to be forgotten by those who were candidates at the general election. From the moment when the Gladstone Ministry resigned, the country rang with platform speeches from the Cassiterides to Ultima Thule—from the Naze to Cape Clear. The anxiety to secure support from the newly enfranchised rural labourers gave prominence to Mr Jesse Collings’s formula of “three acres and a cow,” which became the battle-cry of the Liberal party; while, on the other hand, the importance of the Irish vote in many English

and Scottish borough constituencies undoubtedly seduced some Conservative candidates into a dangerous dalliance with the Parnellite programme, and led some to hamper themselves with glib pledges about "equal law for England and Ireland," which subsequent events have made it difficult for them to redeem.

The key-note of Mr Gladstone's appeal to the country was sounded in his first speech delivered in Edinburgh to the Mid-Lothian electors. He passionately urged his party to hold together, in order that, above all things, they should return a Liberal majority so considerable as to make it independent of the Irish vote in the House of Commons. He expressed the hope "that from one end of the country to the other there will not be a single representative returned to Parliament who for one moment will listen to any proposition tending to impair the visible and sensible empire. Whatever demands may be made on the part of Ireland, if they are to be entertained they must be subject to the condition that the unity of the empire shall be preserved."

Mr Parnell was not slow or ambiguous in reply. On November 21, the eve of the elections, the Irish Nationalist Council issued a manifesto, calling on their fellow-countrymen in England and Scotland to vote everywhere against the Liberals,

who had “coerced Ireland and deluged Egypt with blood.” No doubt this had its effect in contributing to the unexpected success of the Conservatives in that part of the electoral field where, of old, they had been weakest, but it could not account for it all. There had manifestly taken place in urban constituencies a notable growth of that kind of moderate opinion of which Smith had been the foremost exponent, almost the pioneer, when he carried Westminster in 1868.

But the time had come for Smith to sever his connection with that historical borough. Redistribution, which had left intact the City of London, abolished the double representation of Westminster, and divided the constituency into three single seats—Westminster, St George’s, and the Strand. Leaving the first two to the care of Lord Algernon Percy and Mr Burdett-Coutts, Mr Smith carried his victorious colours into the Strand district, where he had little difficulty in routing his adversary, Mr Johnson, by a majority of 5645 against 2486.

The ground gained by the Conservatives in the boroughs was lost, and more than lost, in the English counties; whereupon Parnell, whose object it was to keep parties so evenly balanced as to leave any Government at the mercy of

the Irish vote, became alarmed at the threatened preponderance of the Tories, and circulated fresh instructions that Irishmen were to vote Liberal.

Had that astute politician possessed absolute power of regulating the result of the elections exactly to suit the purposes of his party, he could not possibly have adjusted it with greater nicety, for the number of Liberals returned—335—was precisely the same as that of the Conservatives—249—and Home Rulers—86—added together. Mr Gladstone's entreaty for independence had been refused, and both the great parties were left at the mercy of the Irish vote in Parliament. It looked as if an *impasse* had been reached; but rumours, treated at first as incredible, got into circulation that the Liberal chief was about to perform a change of front transcending any feat of opportunism ever attempted by an English statesman. These rumours first took definite shape on December 16, when there appeared in some of the newspapers an outline of a scheme of Home Rule for Ireland attributed to Mr Gladstone. That gentleman immediately circulated a telegram to the following effect:—

The statement is not an accurate representation of my views, but is, I presume, a speculation on them. It is not published with my knowledge or authority, nor is any other beyond my own public declarations.

It is not too much to say that nobody attached any importance to this Delphic utterance : people had learned by experience that its author never committed himself to a statement that was not open at both ends. Before the close of the year it came to be generally understood that Mr Gladstone, determined to regain office at any cost of political honour to himself, and at any hazard to the security of the kingdom, had purchased the Irish vote by undertaking to formulate a complete measure of Home Rule.

It was no holiday task to which Smith had set his hand at the War Office. War had been averted, it is true, but the storm was still rumbling in the East, and England could not afford to relax precautions. On November 15 Smith writes to his daughter Emily :—

I am anxious and low-spirited about Eastern affairs. It looks very much as if *the* great war was about to break out, and the troubles and calamities which may result from it. God only knows, and He only can deliver this country from great misfortunes.

On December 23 came a letter from H.R.H. the Commander-in-Chief, urging the necessity, in view of the threatening aspect of affairs, of a large increase in the army, and enclosing a letter from Sir Frederick Stephenson, command-

ing in Egypt, giving a discouraging description of the outlook there. To this the Secretary for War replied as follows:—

I have read General Stephenson's interesting letter. It is not a cheerful one, but it has the great merit of discussing the situation with complete frankness.

I have taken the liberty of sending a copy of it to Lord Salisbury, as he is in the daily receipt of messages from Sir H. D. Wolff praying for a reoccupation of Dongola.

We did not come to any final decision at our meeting yesterday; but my colleagues recognised the extreme difficulty of increasing the strength of the army by any sudden spurt. It appears to be clear that if the time-expired men are allowed to go, we cannot at the present rate of recruiting add more than 8000 men in each year to the total strength. I have therefore inclined to the conclusion that we must first of all fill up our existing cadres, and provide sufficiently strong depots to meet the case of Regiments with both battalions abroad. This will absorb, I think, the whole addition which we can hope to get in the course of the coming year, and I am doubtful whether it will be possible to do so much. I shall not be afraid to say on paper what I should wish to do if men could be got, but we must wait, I think, for the formation of the new cadres until at least some men are available for them.

CHAPTER VII.

1886-1887.

ANOMALOUS POSITION OF THE GOVERNMENT—RESIGNATION OF THE LORD-LIEUTENANT OF IRELAND AND HIS CHIEF SECRETARY—SMITH IS APPOINTED CHIEF SECRETARY—DEFEAT AND RESIGNATION OF THE GOVERNMENT—MR GLADSTONE'S THIRD ADMINISTRATION—RIOTS IN THE WEST END—MR GLADSTONE'S HOME RULE BILL—HIS DEFEAT—DISSOLUTION OF PARLIAMENT—UNIONIST VICTORY AT THE POLLS—LORD SALISBURY'S SECOND ADMINISTRATION—AUTUMN SESSION—RESIGNATION OF LORD RANDOLPH CHURCHILL—THE "ROUND TABLE" CONFERENCE—SMITH BECOMES FIRST LORD OF THE TREASURY AND LEADER OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS—SUDDEN DEATH OF LORD IDDESLEIGH.

It would be hard to say to which of the two great parties the events of 1886 were destined to prove the more lasting in their consequences, and the immediate position was almost equally perplexing to both. Lord Salisbury was Prime Minister, but as the Government could only reckon 249 supporters among the 670 members of the House of Commons, it was but a question of how many weeks or days after the meeting of Parliament

should run before the inevitable downfall of the Administration. But no indication had been given by their adversaries of a definite policy on the dominant question of the day—the government of Ireland. The project attributed to Mr Gladstone, of conceding Home Rule in such measure as would secure to him the support of the Irish party at Westminster, remained as nebular and hypothetical as when it was first bruited in December.

The Earl of Carnarvon's resignation of the Viceroyalty of Ireland was followed by that of his Chief Secretary, Sir William Hart Dyke. This office, which had of late years become the most onerous in the Government, could no longer be adequately filled by a Minister outside the Cabinet. But it was a post which possessed less attractions than any other. During the late Administration it had been filled by three successive Ministers in five years: of these the first had resigned because his colleagues would not suffer him to carry out his policy; the second had been assassinated; of the third, anxiety and worry had changed his comely black beard and hair to snowy white. To whom could Lord Salisbury turn at this most trying juncture but to the man who had never failed in any trial—to his War Minister, W. H. Smith?

HATFIELD HOUSE, *Dec.* 17, '85.*Confidential.*

MY DEAR SMITH,—As you know, — has refused the Lord Lieutenancy. But now comes a new complication. Last night Dyke came to Beach, & afterwards to me, & explained that he did not want to go on as Irish Secretary. . . . Now it is possible to go on without a Viceroy by the help of Lords Justices, but it is not possible to go on without an Irish Secretary. Are you disposed to take it? supposing, of course, that we are not immediately turned out. I need not tell you how much confidence such an appointment would give to the party & the country. It is not a question whether the acceptance of this proposal would be an advantage to the country—of that there can be no doubt—but whether you will take it. It is the post of difficulty now, & therefore the post of honour. . . . The difficulties are formidable: I am afraid you are the only person who can avert them.—Ever yours very truly,

SALISBURY.

The offer made in these frank terms was accepted from a plain sense of duty. Everybody understood Smith's motives in doing so, none more clearly than his own colleagues.

One line [wrote Lord George Hamilton from the Admiralty] to say how I admire your patriotism, self-sacrifice, and courage for undertaking the Irish Secretaryship. It is an act as gallant & self-denying as any that has won the V.C. in action. . . . You have extricated the Government from a really serious embarrassment.

From the Board of Trade came a letter from

the Right Hon. E. Stanhope, who was soon to succeed him at the War Office :—

If the news I see be true, all I can say is that you are the most public-spirited man in England. But for our sake, & for the sake of the country, I most heartily rejoice.

Brief as Smith's authority was to be at the Irish Office, it lasted long enough to give indication of the policy on which he and his colleagues had resolved as necessary for the maintenance of order in Ireland. The Coercion Acts of Mr Gladstone's Government had lapsed with the close of 1885 ; it was supposed that the late Viceroy, Lord Carnarvon, had favoured an attempt to rule Ireland by the ordinary law. But Smith could see no security in such an experiment. On January 23 he went to Dublin to be sworn in ;¹ on the 26th the Chancellor of the Exchequer gave notice that on the Chief Secretary's return he would introduce a bill for the suppression of the National League and other

¹ A trifling mishap which occurred between the railway station and the Chief Secretary's lodge would assuredly have been accepted in an earlier age as an adverse omen. The Chief Secretary's sword, which with the rest of his luggage was being conveyed on a car, fell off, and getting between the wheel spokes, was snapped in two. And the fulfilment of this evil augury would as surely have been recognised when, on alighting at Euston Station on his return journey at 6 A.M. on January 26, Smith received the news of the fall of the Government during his absence.

dangerous associations, and for the better protection of life and property in Ireland.

In speaking to the motion for the Address, Mr Gladstone, without revealing the whole extent of his conversion to Home Rule, adroitly conveyed an intimation of his desire to confer with the Government on the solution of the dilemma, and endeavoured to throw upon them the responsibility of refusing co-operation :—

Responsibility lies where the means of action lie. In my opinion there could be no greater calamity than to bring this question within the lines of party conflict. If, unhappily, that shall be done, . . . I will, so far as in me lies, take care that I will not be the doer. *It is the Government alone who can act in such a matter.*

And then, as if conscious of the futility of evading the curiosity as to his intentions which the December rumours had aroused, he pronounced a sentence memorable alike for its unusual candour, and as the most cynical declaration of opportunism that ever fell from the lips of a British statesman in the first rank of politics :—

I do not intend . . . to have it determined for me by others at what time and in what manner I shall make any addition to the declaration I laid before the country in the month of September. I stand here as a member of this House, where there are many who have taken their seats for the first time on these benches, and where

there may be some to whom possibly I may avail myself of the privilege of old age to offer a recommendation. I would tell them of my own intention to keep my counsel and reserve my own freedom, until I see the occasion when there may be a prospect of public benefit in endeavouring to make a movement forward, and I will venture to recommend them, *as an old parliamentary hand*, to do the same.

The basis upon which the Government were invited to confer with the leaders of the Opposition was not one upon which they could descend. It was only too manifest that the occasion had arisen when the sole hope of Parliament maintaining control over its own proceedings and authority in all parts of the realm lay in the coalition of Liberals and Conservatives. But to seek that coalition in discussing a scheme—the establishment of a separate Legislature in Ireland—which both parties had always uniformly held as beyond the limits of discussion, was a proposal which Lord Salisbury and his colleagues could not entertain. The coalition was to take place, but not by following Mr Gladstone in his abandonment of settled principles.

Smith's report from Dublin, and the notice ensuing upon it of a new Coercion Bill, at once decided the attitude of the Parnellite party in the House of Commons. The Government were hencefor-

ward at the mercy of the Opposition leaders, who could now reckon on the Home Rule vote. The period of suspense was not long. Mr Jesse Collings had on the paper an amendment to the Address, expressing regret that the Queen's Speech contained no proposal for the provision of allotments and small holdings for agricultural labourers. This amendment was the celebrated "three acres and a cow" in dress clothes, and the Opposition leaders gladly availed themselves of a question upon which they could take issue with the Government, without explaining their own scheme for the settlement of Home Rule. There was, indeed, nothing in Mr Collings's amendment, which was very skilfully drawn, to which the Conservative party could offer resistance in principle; but it is well understood that no Government can suffer an addition to, or abatement from, the programme of legislation set forth in the Queen's Speech, hence every amendment involves a vote of no confidence in Ministers. The division, taken on January 25, showed 331 for the amendment and 252 against it, leaving the Government in a minority of 79. Leaving out 74 Irish Nationalists, whose votes may be reckoned as having been bought by Mr Gladstone's conversion to Home Rule, the majority of Liberals over Conservatives was 5.

The resignation of Lord Salisbury's Cabinet was immediately announced. Smith, in a letter to one of his sisters, written a few days later from Torquay, whither he had gone to get rid of a troublesome cough, alluded briefly and modestly to an interesting circumstance connected with his leaving office:—

The Queen was very gracious to me on Saturday when I gave up the Seals, but I am sure you will be glad to know I remain, by my own strong wish, plain Mr Smith.

In her reply to this letter Miss Smith showed that she approved of her brother declining the honours proffered to him, and so well earned by his services.

I am very glad [she wrote] that for the present you wish to be plain Mr Smith.

The process of Cabinet-making upon which Mr Gladstone now entered was enveloped in more than the usual amount of uncertainty. If it were true, as was shrewdly surmised and confidently asserted, that the "old parliamentary hand" had purchased the support of Mr Parnell and his following by roundly promising to satisfy their aspiration for Home Rule, then, it was clear, he was not in a position to give the assurance demanded by Lord Hartington and Mr Goschen, or even the less complete assur-

ance asked for by Mr Chamberlain and Mr Trevelyan. Moreover, it was difficult to understand how either Sir William Harcourt (who had only a few weeks previously been sneering at the Tories "stewing in their Parnellite juice"), Mr Campbell Bannerman, and other former Ministers under Mr Gladstone, could so soon renounce the emphatic assurance they had given before their constituents, that they would resist the demands of Irish Nationalists. It turned out in the end that, while the Prime Minister had been able to allay the suspicions of the Radical Unionists—Mr Chamberlain and Mr Trevelyan—his former Whig colleagues—the Marquis of Hartington, the Earl of Derby, and Lord Selborne—had felt compelled to stand aloof. On the other hand, Sir William Harcourt and Mr Childers showed no scruples sufficiently strong to prevent them entering the Cabinet—the first as Chancellor of the Exchequer, the other as Home Secretary.

The first notable incident to signalise the advent of a Radical Government to power took place within the limits of Mr Smith's constituency. A protracted frost had caused severe distress among labouring men, and on February 8 a meeting of unemployed was held in Trafalgar Square. Of this advantage was taken by a body

calling itself the Revolutionary Social Democratic League. Inflammatory speeches were delivered and leaflets were scattered among the mob, inciting them to take the law into their own hands and relieve their own distress. A westward movement of the multitude suddenly took place, thousands of roughs rapidly assembled in that inexplicable way so characteristic of great cities, and, surging down Pall Mall and up St James's Place, they smashed windows, pillaged shops, wrecked private houses, stopped carriages, and robbed those inside them. They then passed into Piccadilly and by South Audley Street into Oxford Street, where Police-Superintendent Thompson had the presence of mind to draw a line of constables across the thoroughfare, which had the effect of stopping the disorderly horde and making them disperse as quickly as they had collected. The damage done to property was estimated at over £50,000. Letters poured in upon Smith from his constituents who had suffered loss, and he undertook protracted duties in the work of receiving subscriptions to a Relief Fund and administering it.

When Parliament met on February 18, the Prime Minister announced that before the end of March he hoped to be able to lay before the

House his proposals for the future government of Ireland. The Conservatives showed no slackness in preparing the minds of the people for what was in store for them. There was, at this time, no one in the ranks of the Opposition approaching Lord Randolph Churchill in fire and vigour of oratory, or in the enthusiasm he was able to rouse among his numerous audiences. On March 3, in a speech delivered at Manchester, he made an eloquent appeal to Liberals to join with Conservatives in forming a new political party, which he named Unionist, to "combine all that is best of the Tory, the Whig, and the Liberal—combine them all, whether they be principles or whether they be men." He said that if among the Tories there were persons with whom the Whigs would find difficulty in serving, "those persons would cheerfully stand aside"; and he warned his hearers against the policy of the Separatists, "which would be equivalent to a restoration of the Heptarchy."

In the interval of suspense which preceded Mr Gladstone's declaration as to his Irish scheme, there was no ambiguity in the utterances of the Whig leaders, and he was made perfectly aware that, if his bill should be one to confer a practically independent Legislature on Ireland, he must

prepare for opposition not only from them and the Tories, but also from Mr Chamberlain and Mr Trevelyan, his colleagues in the Cabinet. As time went on, rumours of a schism multiplied, till, on March 26, the resignation of the last-named gentlemen was announced, and there remained no room for doubt as to the sweeping changes involved in the coming measure.

At last, on April 8, Mr Gladstone moved for leave to bring in his bill. The present House of Commons, which, for some inscrutable reason, is only constructed to contain—it would be ludicrous to say accommodate—some 400 out of its 670 members, had on no former occasion been so crowded. Every one wanted to hear, and it was clear that everybody couldn't. Chairs were set on the floor of the House, by which means 70 or 80 additional seats were provided, but the rush for places was scarcely consistent with the decorum usually observed in the legislative Chamber.

Smith spent the Easter recess at Cadenabbia, whence he wrote the following letter to his yachting friend, Mr Penrose Fitzgerald, M.P. :—

April 27, 1886.

I have been studying the new Home Rule and the Land Purchase Bill in the quiet which is afforded by the Lake of Como, and if these bills pass I am very much inclined

to clear out of the old country altogether, with such means as I can carry away with me, and find a home clear of the dishonour of English politics. But we are not beaten in the fight yet—only one's indignation grows. My motive in writing is to ask you if the L. & P. U.¹ have any recent facts as to the prices given by purchasers of tenants' interests in farms. Such facts would, I should think, be very useful in discussing the two bills.

Have you observed that in the Land Bill charges joint interests are to be estimated upon the scale of the National Debt Commissioners, so that it may happen that widows' and brothers' portions amounting to half the apparent income would absorb the whole of the capital sum to be received from the Government by the nominal owner, and while the option is offered to every landowner, the Government is not bound to buy from any one of them.

The limit of 50 millions of *nominal* capital is strictly insisted upon; but it is optional with the Treasury to issue a lower denomination of stock than 3%, and if this is done, the amount of money available may be largely reduced. The debentures also have no Imperial guarantee, and the interest on them is not to exceed 3%. Better—more honest—bills would have been drawn by a college debating society.

It is not necessary to follow the initial stages of a controversy which is still pending, and is, at the moment of writing, passing through another acute phase,² but allusion must be made to some of the events of the last night of the debate

¹ Loyal and Patriotic Union.

² Parliament has, during the present year (1893), been engaged in the discussion of Mr Gladstone's second Home Rule Bill.

on the second reading. This took place on June 8. Lord Hartington, restrained probably by personal feelings towards his old leader, had up to this time not broken silence in the debate, and it was understood that he was averse from doing so. But the Unionist Liberals were convinced of the importance of his uttering a rallying cry—for it was still uncertain how many followers he could command—and it was in deference to their repeated entreaty that he delivered a speech which undoubtedly told weightily on the division list. The result was thus:—

| | |
|---------------------------------------|-------|
| For the Second Reading | 313 |
| Against | 343 |
| | <hr/> |
| Majority against Government | 30 |

The tellers for the majority were both Liberals, the Hon. Henry Brand and Mr Caine—a combination of names which suggested to the Home Rulers sinister allusions to the “brand of Cain.”

Ninety-three Liberal members followed Lord Hartington into the “No” lobby; and thus, as in 1885, the second week in June saw the downfall of a Gladstone Administration.

Three days later the announcement was made in both Houses that the Queen had been advised to dissolve Parliament. All contentious business

was withdrawn, the necessary supplies were voted, and the shortest Parliament of Queen Victoria's reign was dissolved on June 25.

If the appeal to the constituencies was at short notice, the answer was not capable of being misinterpreted. The net result of the general election was to increase the majority of 30 by which Mr Gladstone's bill had been thrown out of the old House of Commons, into one of 113 in the new House. Mr Smith had to encounter a farcical opposition in the Strand Division, where the result of the poll was—

| | |
|------------------------------|------------|
| Smith (C.) | 5034 |
| Skinner (L.) | 1508 |
| Majority for Smith | <hr/> 3526 |

The Queen sent for Lord Salisbury, who approached Lord Hartington with the view of forming a Coalition Government, to whom he expressed his willingness either to take office under him, or, he and his colleagues standing aside altogether, to give him loyal support as the head of a Liberal-Unionist Cabinet. This overture was declined, and a purely Conservative Ministry was formed, in which Smith held his old office of Secretary of State for War.

The leading part borne by Lord Randolph

Churchill in the events which led to the overthrow of the Gladstonian Ministry—the enthusiasm with which he was regarded by Conservative electors throughout the country—above all, the devotion shown towards him by his party in the House of Commons—had prepared the public for his appointment as Chancellor of the Exchequer and leader of the House of Commons. It was a dazzling position for so young a statesman (he was then only thirty-seven); but the vast preponderance of opinion indorsed his promotion, and none of his elder colleagues gave more generous approval than Smith, who, in the Parliament of 1880, had sometimes had to endure sharp and scarce friendly criticism from the member for Woodstock. He wrote to Mrs Smith on August 20, the morning after the first sitting of the new Parliament for the despatch of business:—

Well, you see we passed through our first night pretty well, and all our friends seem to be satisfied. Randolph spoke very well, with great care, a great sense of responsibility, and some nervousness; but he was withal clear and strong, and the House generally was satisfied. The Irish threaten a long debate, but I am hopeful, as the tone after Randolph was low and poor. . . . Poor Mrs M——! She has hard work, has she not? You have no experience of that kind of thing in Westminster on my behalf, and I think if you had I should have left Parliament some time ago.

A week later his tone was not quite so cheerful :—

August 26.

We have had a nasty night—not injurious to ourselves, but troublesome, and I have had to sit almost constantly in the House. The heat has had something to do with it, I think, and I am beginning to have less hope of getting down early in September; but we must work on and do our best. The House is thoroughly factious—that is, the Opposition—and so we all get cross together, but I am keeping well.

And when the autumnal equinox arrived, and summer was bidding farewell to an imprisoned Parliament, his tone acquired a tinge of despair :—

Sept. 22.

It is simply beastly. Here I am at 6.45 writing to you instead of taking a quiet turn round the garden with you; and it has been talk, talk, and worry, worry all the afternoon, for no purpose whatever which can have any useful end; but as a member of the Government I have been obliged to stay with the other members, or our supporters would have had a right to complain and would have gone away. . . . Although I am very much disappointed at not being with you, perhaps it is as well that I don't make a rush down and a rush back again to-morrow morning, for I am very tired.

A confidential letter written at this time to Smith by an English correspondent at Strassburg illustrates the general feeling prevalent on the

Continent in regard to the position of parties in England :—

Everything is Peace. I spoke to the Crown Prince, and I have seen other persons, but there are no symptoms of war. It is strange, but a fact.

Further, I am told that England is the Country to which all eyes abroad are turned. It is said that P^{ce} Bismarck cannot count with us because, were we to declare any particularly strong policy, he does not know how long the present Government may remain in power, and another Cabinet might repudiate all the promises or arrangements of the present one. This is the pith of what I have to report.

The fact is, our system of Government and the present relations of parties in England are not understood abroad. Words are not sufficient. No Foreign Statesman would appear to be able to count with them. They require facts; they require us to show our hand in order to believe in us. P^{ce} Bismarck's apparent friendship for Russia now is simply to preserve Peace, which he believes would be threatened if he gave Russia and France the opportunity of shaking hands.

The chief event of this short session was a Tenant Relief Bill introduced by Mr Parnell, providing for the suspension of any defaulting tenant who should pay half his rent and half his arrears ; and Mr Gladstone showed how far he had left his old principles behind him by supporting this fresh measure for the confiscation of the property of Irish landowners.

Parliament was prorogued on September 25,

and the dominant feeling among Ministerialists was admiration for the skill with which Lord Randolph had discharged the delicate duties of leader. But proportionate to the warmth of this feeling was the shock caused by an event which occurred before the close of the year. A leading article in the 'Times' of December 23 announced the resignation of Lord Randolph Churchill, who had disagreed with his colleagues on the question of Army and Navy expenditure.

Such an act on the part of the leader of the House of Commons, occurring within a few weeks of the beginning of a new session, must have been a severe strain on the stability of any Ministry ; much more so to one which relied for its majority in the House on an alliance cemented in haste with a section of its hereditary foes, brought about by the pressure of extraordinary and possibly temporary conditions, and tested thus far by the experience of no more than a six weeks' session. Add to all this that France and Germany on the one hand, and Russia and Austria on the other, armed to the teeth, were watching each other jealously ; that it seemed to require but a trifling occurrence to bring about a mighty war ; and that nearer home the leader of the Opposition had championed the cause of Irish disaffection,—and it will be seen that this season of peace and

goodwill was one of misgiving and apprehension to all who had at heart the welfare of England.

Lord Palmerston once expressed the opinion that the life of the strongest Parliamentary Government was never worth more than three months' purchase; but when it became known that the negotiations which had been at once renewed with the view of inducing the Marquis of Hartington to take office had failed, and that he had resolutely refused to do so, few people would have been found so speculative as to reckon on the endurance of the Unionist Administration over a single month. That Lord Hartington, contrary to the opinion of those most strongly opposed to Mr Gladstone's policy, acted wisely on this occasion, will be realised when the action at that time of Mr Chamberlain and the Radical wing of the Liberal-Unionists is considered. Mr Chamberlain asked, seeing that the Liberal-Unionists were at one with Mr Gladstone on every question except the Irish one, and even on the Irish question agreed with him on three points out of four, why it should be impossible to agree upon a line of policy, and settle their differences sitting at a round table. Thereupon came the proposal for a conference, heartily indorsed by Mr Gladstone; and when Mr Chamberlain and Sir George Trevelyan as

Unionists, and Sir William Harcourt and Mr John Morley as Home Rulers, met on January 13, under the chairmanship of Lord Herschell, at the celebrated Round-Table Conference, it seemed as if the "old parliamentary hand" was on the point of winning back the allegiance of half the Liberal-Unionists.

At this critical moment Mr Goschen decided to throw in his lot with Lord Salisbury, and accept the office vacated by Lord Randolph Churchill. But, having failed in his candidature for an Edinburgh seat at the general election, Mr Goschen was without a seat in the House. The Exchange Division of Liverpool was vacant at the moment by reason of the death of Mr Duncan, who had won the seat for the Separatists at the general election by a majority of 170. For this vacancy Mr Goschen was put forward ; but the spirits of Conservatives, which had revived when so excellent a substitute for Lord Randolph had joined the Cabinet, were once more cast down by his defeat at Liverpool, where he failed to carry the seat by 7 votes. However, a way out of the dilemma was provided by Lord Algon Percy, who generously gave up his seat in St George's, Westminster, in order that the Chancellor of the Exchequer might not again have to run the risk of defeat.

The difficulties of the situation, however, were far from being at an end here. The question had to be settled who was to lead the Unionist party in the House of Commons. Under ordinary circumstances, when the Prime Minister is in the House of Lords, the Chancellor of the Exchequer becomes Leader of the House of Commons. But Mr Goschen was a Liberal,¹ and the great majority of Unionists were Conservatives. It was pretty plainly to be understood that they would not work cordially except under a man of their own party.

Under these peculiar circumstances all eyes turned upon W. H. Smith, who, despite the mediocrity of his oratorical power, was felt to be the one safe man to whom the lead could be assigned. Like every other advancement which befell him, he sought it not—it came to him, and, with much misgiving in his ability for the duty, he ceased to be Secretary of State for War, and became First Lord of the Treasury and leader of the House of Commons. A single sentence from a letter written at this time to the Rev. Canon Nisbet clearly expresses his own feelings about it :—

You are kind enough to speak of the honour attaching

¹ He did not formally join the Conservative party and become a member of the Carlton Club till 1893.

to my new position. I shrunk from it, as it involves the use of qualities which I have not a claim to possess; but it was presented to me as a duty, and I felt bound to endeavour to do what I could for my Colleagues and for the Country.

To his constant correspondent, Miss Giberne, he wrote three days later:—

. . . My ground of hope and trust—not confidence—is that I believe I am doing my duty. I could not help it, unless I had shirked for fear of personal consequences to myself; and it does not matter what happens to me or to my reputation if for the time being the work is going on.

So I trust that all my real friends, such as you are, will pray God to give me the wisdom, the strength, and the courage I need for the great work thrust upon me, and I comfort myself in the belief that I shall have all that is good for me.

This advance of Smith to the highest place in the House of Commons coincided with an event which gave him deep pain. The Earl of Iddesleigh, as Sir Stafford Northcote, had been the first departmental chief under whom he had served—a kind of political godfather to him: there had grown up between these men a warm personal friendship. Five years before this Northcote had given evidence of his complete confidence in Smith by writing to him:—

I hope you will not object to a liberty I want to take with your name. I am just making a new will, in which

I have given my two elder sons the charge of any MSS. I may leave, desiring them to exercise their discretion about publishing any of them: and I wish to add a request that if they feel any doubt they will consult you, who will, I hope, not refuse to give them your advice.

The course of events had now brought about Lord Iddesleigh's retirement from the Foreign Office, in order to facilitate the changes in the Cabinet consequent on Lord Randolph Churchill's retirement, and there was some talk of his leaving public life altogether. On January 9 Smith wrote to beg him not to do so:—

I see by the 'Western Morning News' that there is some doubt whether you will remain in the Cabinet. As an old friend, will you let me say what pain it would give me if you went from us? I hold on, greatly against every personal feeling and inclination. I do not like the work I am called upon to do. I distrust my own powers to do it, and I remain and try, probably facing political death because I am told it is my duty. I do not attempt to use such language to you. I do not know, for Salisbury has not told me—having intentionally kept away while all these changes have been going on—what he has said to you, but I am quite sure of this, that it would be a real sorrow to us all if we were not to meet you again in Cabinet.

Three days later, on January 12, Lord Iddesleigh came to London to take leave of his subordinates at the Foreign Office. He called at the chambers of the First Lord of the Treasury in

Downing Street, and, while his arrival was being announced to Lord Salisbury, was seized with an affection of the heart, and died in the course of twenty minutes. The circumstances were such as deeply to move his friends, and indeed the whole country, for it could not but appear as if an old and faithful servant of the State and of his party had been gently shelved to make way for younger and bolder men.

You have heard the news [Smith wrote on the same day to one of his daughters]: it is very sad, and yet it is not an unhappy ending for the man. I hear that Lord Iddesleigh appeared at the Foreign Office to be in exceedingly good health and spirits, and he said good-bye to Sir James Fergusson very cheerfully, implying that it was only for a time, and that he was coming back again to the Government. He then left the Foreign Office, crossed Downing Street to No. 10, and walked up-stairs to the vestibule of Lord Salisbury's room, was seen by Henry Manners¹ to stagger, and was caught by him before he fell, and placed on a sofa, from which he never rose or spoke. He lived 20 minutes, and in the time three doctors were brought to him, but they could do nothing, and Dr Granville, his own attendant, said he was not at all surprised, for he knew, and the whole family knew, that the end might come at any time in this way.

Just before I heard of this I had a really touching letter from Salisbury on one I had sent him, enclosing a letter from Harry Northcote about his father and himself. It

¹ Now Marquis of Granby, M.P.

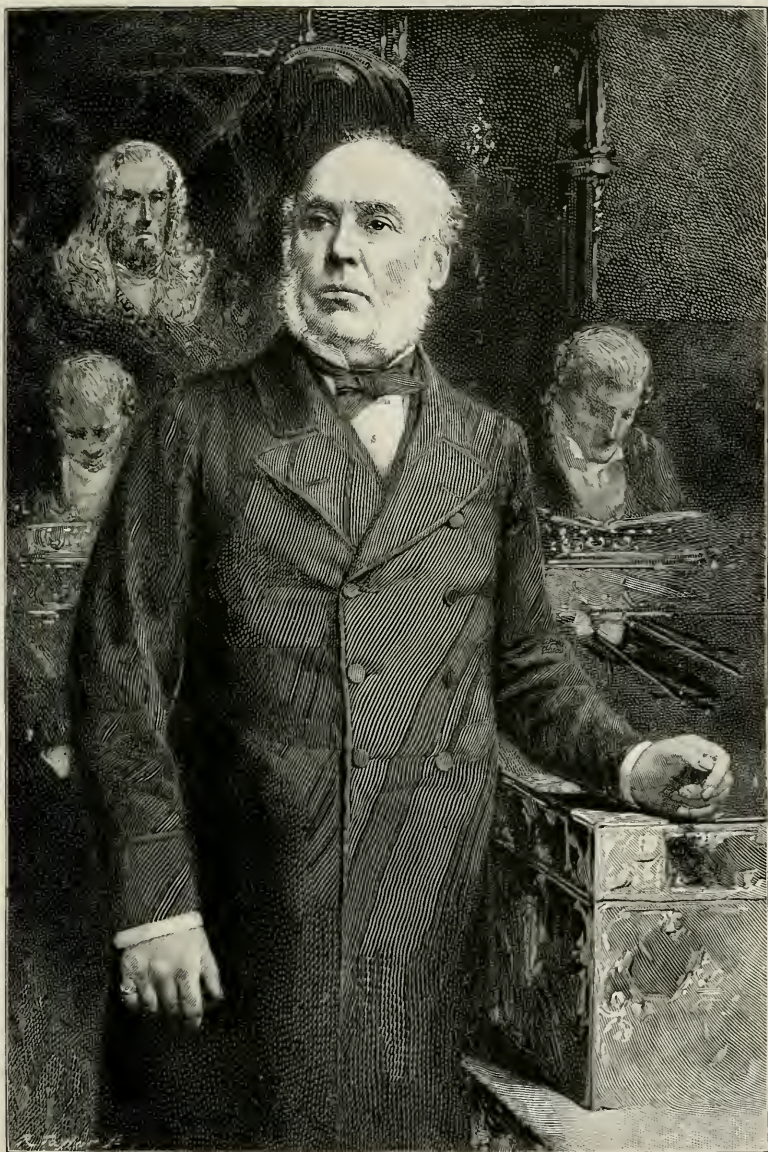
will be of historical value, as it will really prove conclusively how tenderly Salisbury wished to deal with his old friend and colleague. It is doubtful if we go down to Osborne under the circumstances. Salisbury was to have gone by the 3.40 train, but under the strain he postponed his departure, and telegraphed to the Queen. She was probably out driving at the time, as no answer had been returned half an hour ago; but I will write by the late post if I do not go down.

Smith was, as may be supposed, deeply affected by this event :—

It is very sad, is it not [he wrote on 13th to another correspondent]? and yet mainly for us, the survivors and spectators of the abrupt termination of an honourable, an useful life—useful to the end.

And again on 16th to Miss Giberne :—

I am writing to you in very low spirits, for here in this house died only four days ago one of my oldest political and personal friends. It was not an unhappy death for him, for he had shown only a few minutes before by his manner and his conversation that he was at peace with all men, and he had done his work with all his might up to the end. But still it was a great shock to us all, and although I have known for years that there must be a sudden close to his life, yet the termination of a protracted dread is a shock and blow.



RIGHT HON. W. H. SMITH ADDRESSING THE HOUSE OF COMMONS.

CHAPTER VIII.

1887.

LEADERSHIP OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS—THE ROUND-TABLE CONFERENCE—RULES OF PROCEDURE—RESIGNATION OF SIR M. H. BEACH—MR BALFOUR BECOMES IRISH SECRETARY—OBSTRUCTION IN PARLIAMENT—EXTRACTS FROM PRIVATE CORRESPONDENCE—"OLD MORALITY"—THE CRIMES BILL IN THE COMMONS—CLOSE OF SESSION—SMITH'S SUCCESS AS LEADER—LETTER FROM LORD RANDOLPH CHURCHILL—THE 'TIMES' AND "PARNELLISM AND CRIME"—SMITH'S METHOD IN ADMINISTERING PATRONAGE—CIVIL LIST PENSIONS—HIS ROOM AT THE HOUSE OF COMMONS—DINNER "BEHIND THE CHAIR"—DAILY ROUTINE.

It was under the discouragement of the events narrated in the last chapter that Smith had to enter upon his duties as leader of the House of Commons. Parliament assembled on January 27, and it immediately became evident that the Opposition had drawn encouragement from what had taken place since the autumn. Their spirits were further raised by the speech of Lord Randolph Churchill, who, taking an early opportunity to explain the causes of his resignation, dwelt

not only on having been unable, as Chancellor of the Exchequer, to become responsible for the Estimates presented to him by the heads of the Admiralty and War Office, but added—

Of course, sir, it would be idle to deny what has, I fancy, become fairly well known—that there were other matters of grave importance on which it was my misfortune to hold opinions differing from those of Lord Salisbury.

Taken in conjunction with the anticipated reunion of the Liberal ranks as the outcome of the Round-Table Conference, this speech seemed to indicate that not only would the Government have to face an Opposition reinforced by the return of the Liberal-Unionists, but would also have on their flank a watchful and bitter critic in the person of the late Chancellor of the Exchequer.

When Lord Randolph Churchill had delivered his personal explanation and sat down, Smith rose to make his first speech as leader of the House, and prefaced his observations on Lord Randolph's statement by a few deprecatory words, almost homely in their simplicity:—

I have, sir, on rising, to make an appeal to the House. Placed in the position in which I am, I desire to appeal to hon. members for their indulgence and for that favourable interpretation of all my actions which are necessary

to one who feels deeply his own deficiencies in following in the steps of the many great men who have held the important position which I now fill. I appeal to them in the hope that by the cordial support of my hon. friends on this side of the House, and by the generous interpretation of my acts by right hon. and hon. gentlemen opposite, I may be enabled, to the best of my ability, to maintain the order and decorum of the proceedings of this House, and the decencies of debate.

As it turned out, the hopes of the Separatists, alike in the future action of Lord Randolph Churchill and in the fruits of the Round-Table Conference, were destined to disappointment. In the meantime, however, they sufficed to inspire the Opposition with extraordinary activity, and the debate on the Address was prolonged till February 17, and even then it was only by application of the closure that it was brought to an end.

The first business then taken up was the reform of the Rules of Procedure, and the First Lord of the Treasury laid on the table a draft of new rules—the fifth set which had been submitted since Mr Gladstone first attempted, in 1882, to deal with the modern evils of obstruction. That vigorous measures were necessary if Parliament was to continue the transaction of affairs was clearly shown, if further evidence had been required, by the fact that the debate

on the first rule, establishing closure by a bare majority, subject to the discretion of the Speaker, occupied no less than thirteen nights. Of the fifteen new rules submitted by Mr Smith, the first was the only one persisted with and carried, as the Government had to turn to other business.

But—

“When sorrows come, they come not single spies,
But in battalions,”

and there was yet another trial in store for Ministers. Sir Michael Hicks Beach, who occupied the post of Irish Secretary, was compelled, by a serious malady of the eyes, to resign his office on March 3; and the appointment of Mr Arthur Balfour to succeed him conveyed little confidence to the Unionists in general, to whom as yet he had only been known as one of the less forward members of the extinct Fourth Party. Those who knew him intimately had better hopes, because they were aware of the “grit” which lay under his languid manner and somewhat effeminate demeanour; but even they must have felt some misgivings when they saw committed to him a task which had already within seven years severely taxed, and in some cases overtaxed, the endurance and moral courage of no fewer than eight statesmen of the first rank: and this all the more because the first piece of work for the new Chief Secretary was



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to be the odious one of introducing a new Crimes Bill; and the second—almost as onerous and almost more delicate—the passage of a bill dealing with the ulcerated question of land tenure in Ireland.

But Mr Balfour justified, and more than justified, the confidence reposed in him. The session of 1887 has become memorable as the most trying that has ever taken place, whether from the acrimony of the debates or the late hours to which the sittings were prolonged. In addition to work in the House, Ministers were called on to take part in a number of functions connected with the celebration of her Majesty's Jubilee, and the labours of this summer left a lasting mark on the constitutions of more than one member of the Government. Smith's letters abound in references to the harassing experience he had to undergo:—

HOUSE OF COMMONS, *May 10.*

You seem to have plenty to do, and to find amusement in doing it. I have plenty to do, but the amusement—well, that is not much. . . . We had a rough night last night. I put the closure on two or three times, and only reported progress in Committee at $\frac{1}{4}$ past 4, getting into bed at about $\frac{1}{2}$ past 5. To-night things have been quiet, but quite as obstructive as ever, and we shall have to do something more yet to get the Bill through. This morning I drove for an hour in the open carriage, for I was tired. We called at Arklow House, and poor Beres-

ford Hope is, I fear, dying. . . . It is now just 11. I shall not stay up so late to-night.

May 11.

. . . We have had another dreary day—5½ hours in Committee, and we have hardly advanced as many words in the bill; but I used the closure again, and got majorities of 100. It is very sickening work, and if it were not duty I should throw it up; but the people behind me are very warm, and very good.

May 12.

We had asked Sir F. Stephenson and Sir F. Grenfell—both from Egypt—to come to a 9.45 breakfast, and they talked very pleasantly; and it was very pleasant to me to go back on my old War Office experiences. They left at 11, and my day began again. I came down to Downing Street about 1, and had more than my ordinary share of work. I lunched at the United Service Club, and there saw admirals and generals who seemed glad to recognise me; and then at our meeting here we read the Duke of Connaught's Leave Bill a second time by 318 votes against 45. The House is now going on droning over a quantity of motions which mean little or nothing, and about 2 I hope we shall get the Jubilee Vote.

May 13.

It is really very pleasant to know that you are enjoying your treatment.¹ I cannot say I very much enjoy mine, but it has to be borne, and the work must be done. To-night we are still on that weary first clause of the bill, and Mr Gladstone is staying and dining here to be ready to make a speech against us, but he will not inflict much, if any,

¹ Written to his daughter, who was at Aix.

harm. You see we finished the work we had cut out for ourselves last night. On Monday we take Supply again, and I hope then we shall get all that we want before the holidays begin; but I am still in a very anxious state as to the condition of public business. The obstruction of the two Oppositions now united in one is beyond anything that has been seen in this House, and unless it gives way under the pressure of public opinion, very drastic measures will have to be taken.

Here I am again droning on, while the Irish and their allies spit and splutter and obstruct. It is desperate work, unmitigated obstruction, utterly regardless of all consequences to Parliament or the country. We have now been 8 days over one clause, and we have not finished it yet. The country is getting very angry, and is beginning to say that the Government is "deplorably weak" in not insisting on faster procedure. I got to bed at 4 this morning, and had a fair night. To-day we three went to the wedding, at S. Margaret's, of Lord Cranborne. Literally everybody was there, and it went off very well indeed. I went from the church to Downing Street, where I found enough to do, and then came down here, when I moved that we all go to church next Sunday,¹ and Gladstone seconded me, and it was carried unanimously.

May 19.

I am writing again from my seat while Healy is speaking. It is not lively, but I have to bear it.² We have

¹ To attend the Jubilee Thanksgiving Service at St Margaret's.

² Mr Healy, if he was not lively, was at least forcible, and may be credited with having brought some novelties into parliamentary rhetoric. Alluding to the circumstances of Mr O'Brien's imprisonment, he introduced the following flower of oratory:—

"I declare before heaven that if I am put in jail, if I am treated

had a somewhat better evening. The famous Labouchere moved the adjournment at the meeting of the House, and I put on the closure at $\frac{1}{2}$ past 6. They were very angry, but it did them good. Since then we have had the Criminal Bill, and we have had 5 divisions, and have made some progress. Now they are obstructing at $\frac{1}{2}$ past 1 in the morning the Report of Supply, but I hope we shall get it in another hour. The Queen had a large party last evening. Closure kept me here, so that I could not leave by the 6.20, but I got down by 8.10 to Slough, and drove across. There were Indians, a Maharajah and his wife, the Crosses, Lady Ely, and Stephenson—15 in all. She was very nice to me.

May 20.

I really think I may get to bed by 2 o'clock this morning, and it seems so early as to be almost incredible; but I had to get out of Committee with the Crimes Bill shortly after 12 in order to take the Duke of Connaught's Bill before the half hour, and the Duke was not opposed when it was clear he could not be successfully, so that business was quickly got through. . . . I have been sleeping better. Thanks for your kind inquiries; but my nights have been short, and I am a little tired, but otherwise quite well.

May 22.

E. M. and I went to St Margaret's this morning. E. and F. I put into the Church on my way to the House, M. went with Mrs Peel, who had been kind enough to ask you or one of them to go to the Speaker's house to see the

as my hon. friend has been, if I am compelled to do the disgusting things which my hon. friend has been compelled to do, I shall save up a bucket of slops and carry it across the floor of this House and fling it into the face of the Irish Secretary as he sits upon that bench."

procession, and then by a short cut get into church before we arrived. The procession was headed by Mr Erskine in full court dress with the mace, then came the Speaker in his gold robe, then the Clerks of the House in wig and gown, and the first row of the members consisted of Hartington, Courtney, Gladstone, and myself; the other members of the Government and Privy Councillors following next. Ordinary members followed in fours. The ground was kept by the Westminster Volunteers and police, and there was a great crowd behind. The clergy and choristers met us in Westminster Hall, and walked before us across the road to the church. Within the altar rails were the two archbishops and the Abbey dignitaries. The service lasted $2\frac{1}{2}$ hours, the sermon, which was most eloquent, $\frac{3}{4}$ an hour. The whole was most interesting but somewhat fatiguing.

May 22.

My last letter to you before I start for Aix. I am tired—very tired—but the thought of rest and of joining you refreshes me. I have been a little brutal to-night. The House does not want to meet to-morrow, but the Opposition wishes to advance business as little as possible, and I have put it to them gently: Pass the clause, and I will move the adjournment this evening; don't pass it, and I won't—and I think we shall get it, for we have made very fair progress, taking everything into account.

July 4.

I *was* tired this evening, and I had to sit on the bench without moving until 8.20, watching and waiting to bark and to bite; but in the end I got my motion by a large majority. There was, however, some very hard hitting all round, and we came off like a pack of schoolboys who had had a real row.

July 8.

I am all right to-day, and less tired. The House sat until $\frac{1}{2}$ past 4 this morning, but I went to bed at 3. We had our Cabinet at 12, and parted at 2.30, and since then I have been pretty busy, as I shall be, I think, until the end of the session approaches. We are to divide fairly early this evening, and then go to bed, for every one is tired, and the heat is very great indeed. It is knocking up some of our men, and one is wicked enough to hope it may have an equal effect on the other side.

August 22.

As I grow older I realise that I am getting nearer to the end myself; and while the close of life loses any terror it once had, the duty of being useful to all around me—of so using my powers and my life as to do every day the very best I can under the circumstances in which I find myself, comes home to me *every* day with greater strength. So I must not disable myself by fretting, or so entirely turn my thoughts in one direction as to find myself diverted from the daily work of life. . . . Help me, as you do, I know, in prayer, and be assured that for me and for others whom you love, you have the petitions which you make to Him who is all Wise as well as all Good. My love and my prayers go out to and for you. He will bless and keep all we love in all that is *really* good for them.

August 26.

The debate was a very good one for us last night, and Balfour and the Scotch Solicitor-General¹ spoke extremely well; and to-day Webster, the Attorney-General, did very well in answer to Trevelyan, whom he thoroughly ex-

¹ Mr Robertson, now Lord Justice-General of Scotland.

posed; but we had a very late night. It was 5 when I got into bed, and I am surprised I am not very tired indeed; but I am very well, I am thankful to say. Help me, . . . as I am helping you.

Sept. 1.

The Irish broke out again this evening, and have been as nasty as they could be. They are now talking wildly on a motion for adjournment, and are giving as much trouble as they can; but I do not lose all hope of finishing Supply early next week. I am not nearly so tired to-night, after my good sleep last night.

Sept. 2.

I, in my turn, have little to say to you this evening. We had a bad night, and excessive annoyance from the Irish. To-day things look a little better; but it is very galling to have to endure insult and provocation from these men, and to be quite unable to cast it back again, except at the cost of prolonging our suffering.

Sept. 8.

We are not making much progress yet this evening, but the members may become reasonable as the evening goes on; but prorogation before Friday is almost impossible.

In writing to older friends he permitted himself to betray deeper anxiety than he ever allowed to appear in letters to his children. In truth his temperament was the reverse of sanguine, and sometimes it seemed as if he must have given way under the pressure on him. Miss Giberne

was one of those to whom he was wont to write most freely :—

March 20.

We have great anxieties and great responsibilities, but we can be carried through them all to the issue which shall be right for this people by God's help, and by His alone. Pray *now* that we may have the wisdom we need. I believe we shall succeed if we are aided in this way.

May 11.

I have been wonderfully supported hitherto, but every now and then I feel depressed at the prospect before me and the burden I have to bear ; but I am going on looking for guidance and strength from day to day. You cannot tell, however, what doubts and anxieties overtake me from time to time, as to whether on this or on that question, to be decided suddenly, one is right. It is, however, a great comfort and a great support to feel that unseen help is coming to me ; and I earnestly hope it may never be withdrawn. I must fail sometimes, and it may be good for me that I should do so ; but I know I am greatly helped and sustained by the prayers of those who ask that right may be done.

This constant reliance on a higher Power, though it found no direct expression in Smith's speeches or general conversation, was undoubtedly perceptible in his bearing and actions, and he had not been very long the foremost man on the Treasury Bench before one of those happy expressions which take their rise no one knows where, but survive because everybody realises their fitness,

attached itself to him. His sobriquet was "Old Morality"—conferred in no unkindly spirit, but in recognition of qualities respected by all.¹

Smith's colleagues in the Cabinet allude to one feature in his conduct of parliamentary business at this time, which distinguished him from former leaders of the House of Commons. He was always remarkably explicit in laying before the Saturday council a clear programme of work to be done in the following week.

It became his duty during this session to ask for the confidence of the House in taking action for which there was no precedent. The slow progress of the Crimes Bill in Committee had made it clear that unless the session were to be of indefinite length, obstruction would prevail against all efforts of the Government, although aided by the closure, to carry it through. Four clauses only had been passed when, on June 10, Smith moved a resolution that if the bill were not reported by ten o'clock on the 17th, the Chairman should proceed to put the remaining clauses without debate. Mr Gladstone opposed the resolution, but advised the Parnellites to clear the bill out of the way, so as to get to the Land Bill, which had come down from the House of

¹ The genial fancy of Mr H. W. Lucy is the putative parent of this and many other "to-names" of public men.

Lords ; but in the end Smith carried his motion by 245 votes to 93, only a small fraction of the Gladstonian party going into the "No" lobby with the Parnellites. When the appointed hour arrived on the 17th, the Committee were discussing the 6th clause of the bill ; Sir Charles Russell was speaking against it ; the Chairman, interrupting him, rose and put the clause, and, after a single division, the indignant Opposition, Gladstonian and Parnellite, rose and marched out of the House. The remaining fourteen clauses were then put, and agreed to without debate or division.

The session was dragged to its close on September 16. The Criminal Law and Procedure Act—the most important addition to the Statute-Book during the year—had occupied by far the greater part of the session, and differed from the long series of "coercion" Acts which had preceded it in this, that, instead of being framed to endure only a limited number of years (generally calculated according to the probable longevity of the Government in office at the time), its provisions were to be permanent, though capable of suspension at any time by the Lord Lieutenant. Smith's leadership had proved successful beyond dispute. One afternoon, in the privacy of the smoking-room, a well-known member of the Opposition defined the source of this success. Addressing

a supporter of the Government, he said wistfully, "You know you have an immense advantage over us, for your fellows *hate* the Grand Old Man ; but, confound it ! who can help *liking* Old Morality ?"

The respect which was willingly paid to the leader of the House by all sections of the Opposition had its counterpart in a much warmer feeling among men on his own side. There was in Smith a complete absence of that *hauteur* which men in high places often unconsciously suffer to chill their intercourse with subordinates in office, and he possessed the innate tact which preserved him from the opposite error of making elaborate efforts to be considerate or polite. His manner to all was perfectly natural and suave ; access to him was surrounded by no difficulty and little ceremony ; men learnt to consult him as a wise friend even on their private affairs ; would that it were permissible to recount some of the innumerable instances of his generosity and liberality. Those whose duties brought them into official relations with him will not readily forget the kindly greeting with which he always received them, whether at the Treasury or in the First Lord's room behind the Speaker's chair. Even when he was most worried by the exasperating obstruction of business in the House, or in suspense about the result of a coming critical

division, or, as was the mournful case during the last two years of his life, tormented by painful and irritating disease, the pleasant smile and cheering word were never looked for in vain.

His intercourse with the rank and file of his party was always easy and unaffected. It happened once that two members were discussing some point in the side lobby during a division, when Smith happened to walk by. "Here is the head-master," said one of them, "let us refer it to him." "Ah! don't call me that," rejoined the leader of the House, "I am only one of the big boys."

That was the secret of the power which, from the first day he undertook to lead it, Smith exercised over that sensitive, impatient, paradoxical assemblage, the House of Commons. Bold and ingenious policy, sustained by exciting oratory, will always ensure for a time the meed of popular applause; but the House of Commons loves government by common-sense and good humour, and prefers honesty to ingenuity. There is no doubt that Lord Randolph Churchill, had he been so minded, might—as it had been expected he would by many—during this session have inflicted irreparable damage on the Unionist party: a rupture so sudden as that which had severed him from the Cabinet could not take place without

leaving some soreness between old friends. But those who credited him with harbouring resentful malignity against his former colleagues forgot that English gentlemen are actuated by feelings and habits which it is difficult to explain to those who have embraced the methods of unblushing Opportunism—of all creeds the most cynical—the most at variance with all that is great in British statecraft—the most certain, even if it exacts deference, to forfeit respect.

A few sentences from a letter written by Lord Randolph to Smith on April 16, 1887, may serve to show how far he was from plotting the discomfiture of the Cabinet which he had left, or from anxiety to put the leader of the House in a difficulty. There had been a painful scene in the House the night before. Mr Healy had called Colonel Saunderson a liar, and refusing, after reiterated appeals from the Chair, to withdraw the expression, had been promptly named and suspended. It was expected that a resolution would be moved inviting the House to rescind the suspension, and it was rumoured that the Government would not resist this course. Lord Randolph wrote strongly deprecating anything short of resolute opposition to this proposal, not in order to punish Mr Healy, but to support the authority of the Chair, and concluded

a long letter in these words, which certainly convey no expression of unfriendliness to Smith:—

Please let me urge this. You have to fight two battles—one in Ireland against crime, the other in Parliament against disorder. You must win both. The loss of one entails the loss of the other. As you are firm with respect to matters in Ireland, so you should be equally firm with respect to the rigid preservation of order in the H. of Cms. The return triumphant of Healy, after having called a member a liar & defied the chair, under the pretext that Saunderson's conduct justified his conduct, would be ruinous to your position as the defender & guardian of parliamentary order. I quite understand the immense inconvenience which may result from any course which may lead to a postponement of the division on the second reading. In a choice of evils it is best to choose the least, and the greatest evil without doubt would be the selection of a course which establishes precedents of the worst kind, & prepares the way for irretrievable disorder in the H. of Cms.

Excuse this lengthy letter. It deals with a general matter on which I feel much anxiety, & I greatly prefer communicating with you beforehand, to expressing any difference of opinion with you in the House itself.—Yours sincerely,

RANDOLPH S. C.

If the expectation of the Gladstonian section of Liberals had been disappointed by the attitude maintained by Lord Randolph Churchill, they had been not less so by the outcome of the Round-Table Conference. The negotiations had ended in leaving both sections of the Liberal

party in the positions they had occupied at the first meeting. Sir George Trevelyan, it is true, had seceded from the Liberal Unionist party, and carried with him three or four men of less note, but the result of the deliberations had been to accentuate the difference between the policies of Union and Separation, to close up the ranks of the followers of Lord Hartington and Mr Chamberlain, and to compact more firmly the alliance between them and Lord Salisbury's Government. Without doubt the position of the Unionist Administration rested on a far more solid foundation at the close of the year than it had done at its beginning.

An event took place this year which caused a great stir in political circles, and was destined to give rise to a bitter controversy, from which the Government ultimately found it impossible to keep aloof. The 'Times,' moved by the imminent danger of a rupture of the United Kingdom brought about by Mr Gladstone's espousal of the Home Rule cause, had, from the time the question had first assumed serious proportions, hotly championed that of the Union. A series of articles, entitled "*Parnellism and Crime*," appeared in its columns, wherein was traced the complicity of Parnell and his colleagues with a

long series of outrages and terrorism in Ireland. On April 18, these charges culminated in the reproduction of a letter, purporting to be the facsimile of one written by Parnell, remonstrating against the indignation of some members of the Land League on account of his repudiation of the Phoenix Park murderers, and containing this sentence: "Though I regret the accident of Lord F. Cavendish's death, I cannot refuse to admit that Burke got no more than his deserts."

Mr Parnell, from his place in the House, denounced this letter as a barefaced forgery, and on May 3 Sir Charles Lewis moved that the publications in the 'Times' constituted a breach of privilege. To this Smith replied that the Government would oppose the motion, because they were unable to see that either from precedent or on the facts of the case could the charge of breach of privilege be sustained. Mr Gladstone then moved for a Select Committee to inquire into the charges made by the 'Times'; but this motion was also resisted by the Government, and rejected by a majority of 84.

The matter was then laid aside, so far as the House of Commons were concerned, albeit the Irish members were left under a frightful imputation. Many allusions were made to the circumstance from platforms during the recess,

Ministerialist speakers holding that it was Mr Parnell's duty to endeavour to clear himself by bringing an action for libel against the proprietor of the 'Times,' and Gladstonians denouncing the Government for refusing to take steps to defend the honour of members of Parliament.

Meanwhile Mr Balfour, by his resolution and tact in the government of Ireland, had restored confidence to the Loyalists in that country, and the two wings of the Unionist party in Parliament had learnt to depend on each other to a degree which few people had thought it possible to bring about—to which the bitterness of reproach aimed by Gladstonian speakers against the Liberal-Unionists largely contributed. Writing to Smith on December 7, the Rev. Sir Emilius Laurie expressed by a happy parallel the reviving hopes of the country in the maintenance of the union :—

I think that with Lord Salisbury, Mr Goschen, and yourself holding & defending the position like Wellington at Waterloo, with Ld. Hartington, like Blucher, taking the enemy in flank, the country will come triumphantly out of the conflict, & that the political Napoleon, who sprang his attack upon the Constitution so suddenly, so insidiously, & in so unprincipled a fashion, will be defeated. . . . At all events, you carry with you the confidence of all, or nearly all, sensible men, & have behind you a vast reserve of power & goodwill.

The departmental duties of First Lord of the Treasury are, of course, very much lighter than those of the heads of the spending departments, and, when not associated with the office of Prime Minister, their discharge may be made to occupy a very short time in each day. But Smith was of far too conscientious a nature to get through his work in a perfunctory way. In the matter alone of patronage (of which, though it amounts to far less than what it was before the establishment of the competitive system, a considerable share falls to be administered by the First Lord on behalf of the Crown) he was exceedingly scrupulous, and took a degree of pains by patient inquiry and correspondence which has very rarely been bestowed upon it.

His principles in the selection of clergymen to fill Crown livings were very different to those which had sometimes guided his predecessors in office. Appointments were made almost wholly independent of his own views on Church matters, which, though the reverse of indifferent or latitudinarian, were exceedingly tolerant. He was anxious above all things to secure internal peace in diocese and parish, and he always endeavoured to suit the Church views of the locality, and to appoint clergymen who should be in harmony with their bishops on the one hand and their

people on the other. He once remarked to a friend that the administration of ecclesiastical patronage caused him more anxiety than any other part of his duty. He had numerous correspondents among the clergy, some of whom he relied on as understanding and sympathising with his object; but he did not rely on them alone: he would often send down one of his private secretaries to report on any parish in which a vacancy had occurred, to ascertain the prevalent religious views and the social condition of the congregation. At other times he used to send his confidential shorthand writer to attend the services of clergymen who might be suitable for the vacancy, and bring him verbatim reports of the sermons, with confidential memoranda of their appearance, views, ability, and other details. It was only after carefully examining this information that he would proceed to make the appointment.¹

¹ Before Smith became First Lord of the Treasury, and had the disposal of ecclesiastical preferment, recourse was had to his judgment and known discretion in Church matters; but the affairs of the Church militant sometimes got mixed up with those of the War Office. Thus in 1885, when Smith was at the head of the latter department, Lord Salisbury (then First Lord of the Treasury and Foreign Minister) wrote to Smith:—

“I telegraphed to you to ask what were the qualifications of — for preferment. You reply to me that the Bashi-bazouks made difficulties, but they were overcome. I fear our cyphers don't match! Can you answer my question? I rather think of him for —.”

Smith was equally conscientious in awarding the Civil List Pensions, though his administration of this fund was at one time sharply criticised in the press. It had come to be assumed that these pensions had originally been intended for the reward of literary or artistic merit, and complaints were heard, not only that persons who were unable to claim on these grounds had been pensioned, but that the First Lord of the Treasury had shown a want of feeling in causing to be set forth in the published returns a statement of the reason existing for each award, as for instance, "Mrs —, in consideration of her inadequate means of support."

Now these complaints were founded on a complete misapprehension of the origin and intention of these pensions and the regulations affecting them, and were caused, in fact, by Smith's scrupulous care in observing and adhering to them.

It is a little amusing [said a writer in the 'Spectator'], from a cynical point of view, that this special and particular distinction should have been developed under the reign of a statesman so intimately, in a way, connected with literature as Mr W. H. Smith. . . . It was deeply ungrateful of Mr Smith, just as the descriptions in this year's List are ungenerous and injurious both to literary reputation and individual feeling.

But, as Smith was able to prove when the

question was raised in the House of Commons, the Act under which this bounty is administered, so far from limiting the award of pensions to persons connected with literature or art, declares that they shall be given “to such persons only as have just claims on the Royal beneficence, or who, by their personal services to the Crown, by the performance of duties to the public, or by their useful discoveries in science, or attainments in literature and the arts, have merited the gracious consideration of their Sovereign and the gratitude of their country.”

Further, the Select Committee of the House of Commons, appointed in 1838 to inquire into the administration of the Civil List, reported, *inter alia*,—“that in the case of all future Civil List Pensions, the warrant or other instrument of appointment should set forth distinctly the reason and motive of the grant.”

It was precisely the pains which Smith took to carry out the spirit of the Act and the recommendations of the Select Committee which brought on him the ire of some of the quill-driving fraternity. The amount available for award in each year is £1200 ; and if the warrants issued during Smith’s administration of this patronage be examined, it will be seen that he showed great tenderness to indigent authors and

their families. In former years, instances have occurred wherein these pensions have been granted to persons already enjoying military or diplomatic pensions. In 1880, £500 a-year was given to the two daughters of a distinguished nobleman who had for many years drawn a salary of £8000 a-year, and thereafter retired on a handsome pension—emoluments which, it might be supposed, would have enabled him to provide for his surviving family. No such abuse, nor anything of similar nature, can be charged against Mr Smith's administration of the fund; but it is easy to lay a finger on instances to the contrary. In 1885 application was made to Mr Gladstone, when First Lord of the Treasury, for the grant of a pension to that favourite writer, Mr Richard Jefferies, and was refused. When Smith came to the Treasury in 1887, Jefferies was beyond reach of a pension, but £100 a-year was awarded to his widow during her life.

The public is peculiarly jealous—and rightly so—of the manner in which this kind of patronage is administered: it is well, therefore, to put on record the principles uniformly observed by Smith in regard to it during his tenure of office.

The account of Smith's leadership of the House of Commons would not be complete without some

description of the life in his room at the House of Commons. Opening upon the long corridor which runs outside the chamber behind the Speaker's chair are several private rooms. One of the largest of these is allotted to the Leader of the House, with a smaller one opening off it for his private secretary. The Leader of the Opposition occupies another room in the same passage, and the rest are assigned to various Ministers. It may be easily understood that although the room occupied by the Leader of the House is private, it is by no means a solitude. Its privacy is liable to incessant interruption by deputations from outside the House, or by consultation between the Leader's colleagues on emergencies, which so often arise suddenly in the course of a debate. The senior Government Whip is also a frequent visitor. It is his part not only to keep his chief in touch with all the phases of content and discontent among the members of the party generally, but also to warn him of dangers ahead. Sometimes a restive supporter of the Government is invited to an interview with his Leader, or an eager one is admitted at his own request. No one ever failed, while Smith occupied that room, to meet with a kindly reception, or to find his inquiry, "Can I have a word with you?" met with a

reply less cordial than "Come in, my dear fellow ; sit down ; what is it ?"

Then there took place in that room occasional amicable conferences between the Leader of the House and the Leader of the Opposition, and it used to be remarked by any one else who happened to witness the meeting how gracefully Mr Smith, as the younger man, showed deference to Mr Gladstone as the elder, and how courteously the latter seemed to appreciate the compliment.

All this probably has gone on much the same under former Leaders, but in one respect Smith made an innovation on the traditions of this room. The vehemence and persistence of debates, which have increased so much of late years, have rendered necessary the more constant attendance both of Ministers and unofficial members, and a far larger number dine in the House than was contemplated at the time of its construction. Smith, unwilling to be absent from his post even for an hour, began the custom of having dinner served in his private room, and continued to do so until his last session, so that he was ever at hand when wanted. The table was always laid for six, and the party was generally made up of one or more of his colleagues in the Cabinet, Mr Akers Douglas, one or more of his private secretaries,

and any member specially connected with the business under discussion in the House. The room was a long way from the kitchen, which had a prejudicial effect on the viands, added to which was the risk of their being still more cooled down by the interruption of a division or a "count." But if the fare was no more than mediocre, the company was always and under all vicissitudes cheerful. Chaff abounded, and sometimes verged upon wit; and those little parties of hard-worked men remain in memory as bright interludes in a daily routine, inclining, in other respects, to painful monotony.

After dinner, if no debate of an urgent kind was going on, Smith would, for the first time since the morning, have a quiet hour to himself, and begin his daily despatch to the Queen, to be sent off at midnight. Then came Mr Akers Douglas and Mr Jackson, the Secretaries to the Treasury, to settle the order of business for the following day.

CHAPTER IX.

1888.

HAPPINESS IN FAMILY AFFAIRS—THE QUEEN AND THE POPE—
 MEETING OF PARLIAMENT—RULES OF PROCEDURE AGAIN—
 THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT BILL—EXTRACTS FROM CORRE-
 SPONDENCE — DEATH OF ADMIRAL CODRINGTON — LETTER
 FROM LORD STANLEY OF PRESTON — “PARNELLISM AND
 CRIME” — CHARGES AND ALLEGATIONS BILL—LORD RAN-
 DOLPH CHURCHILL’S REMONSTRANCE—SMITH VISITS GLOU-
 CESTER, SALFORD, MANCHESTER, AND EDINBURGH — THE
 AUTUMN SESSION—IRISH LAND PURCHASE BILL—PROLONGED
 PROCEEDINGS—PROROGATION ON CHRISTMAS EVE — SMITH
 GOES TO THE SOUTH OF EUROPE.

It too often happens that the exactions of public life prevail to sever a politician from the enjoyment of home and withdraw his thoughts from the guidance of his children, but no one ever succeeded more completely than Smith in maintaining the closest bonds of confidence with his family. It is pleasant to read of his happiness in this respect as expressed in his intimate correspondence.

To Miss Giberne, January 16, 1888.

Your letter of the 9th invited an answer, and as I have a few minutes before post this evening, I think it better to seize the opportunity, which may not recur again very soon, as we begin work for the year seriously to-morrow.

Frederick left us at Pau on Monday, and came straight home to Grosvenor Place, where he arrived on Tuesday evening, to Mabel and John's¹ delight, as they are keeping house there until their own house is ready for them. He had to look after some business here, which I am gradually throwing upon him as the "young master," and to get to Oxford for the beginning of term on Friday. The boy has grown tall and broad, two or three inches taller than his Father, and he is at present strong and well and manly, but I think he is gentle and good. . . . We got home [from the Continent] quite comfortably, and found John and Mabel waiting for us. This morning B. and Alfred² started for London and for work, and John and Mabel have done likewise; so here Emily and I are left with one child only (Helen) to keep house, but it is a great blessing to feel that the others are all, without exception, pursuing their way through life happily—not without trials, of course, as in Mary's case, but yet happily even in her sorrow, for she is comforting and being comforted. Now I have said a great deal more about ourselves than I had intended; but I thought as I went on that it would please you to hear just how we have passed the last week.

The writer then goes on to discuss a matter on which Miss Giberne had expressed some anxiety.

¹ Mr and Mrs Ryder, his son-in-law and daughter.

² His daughter and son-in-law, Mr and Mrs A. Acland.

An interchange of personal courtesy had lately taken place between the Queen and the Pope, enough, as it appeared, to arouse the suspicion of some of the extreme Evangelical party. Smith's reply is full of sound sense and moderation :—

You ask me about the Queen and the Pope. For my own part I see no harm whatever in the little act of civility. If a R.C. lady was to make you a present of a picture on your birthday, and you in return gave her a little bit of silver-plate on her birthday, I should not say you were going to turn Roman. It is precisely the thing you would not do, if you had any idea of changing your faith. The poor Queen has about as much liking for Romanism as she has for Mohammedanism or Buddhism. She has very many millions of Roman Catholic subjects, as she has millions of the followers of Mohammed and Buddha, and she would be equally civil to any old gentleman professing either faith on such an occasion as the present, but it would be civility and nothing more.

When Parliament reassembled on February 9, Mr Balfour's firm yet considerate administration in Ireland had begun to have its effect upon that country, for he had already attained, in a great degree, to the ideal of statesmanship, by making the new powers with which he had been invested a terror to evil-doers and the praise of them who do well ; while abroad Lord Salisbury's influence

had contributed to bring about a more pacific outlook than had been witnessed since the war between France and Germany in 1870. In the House of Commons the debate on the Address turned chiefly on an amendment moved by Mr Parnell, directed against the alleged harsh administration of the Crimes Act. Nine Irish members were at the time in prison for offences under the Act, and the same resentful feeling which had caused the by-name of "Buckshot" to be applied to Mr Forster, now conceived for the Chief Secretary the sobriquet—ludicrously inappropriate to his character—of "Bloody Balfour." The division on this amendment was anticipated with interest, because it would show the extent to which Sir George Trevelyan's influence had prevailed to detach Liberal-Unionists from support of the Government. The result was encouraging to Ministers: three only of Lord Hartington's party seceded to Home Rule, and one Conservative (Mr Evelyn), which left a majority of 88 for the Government.

For the seventh time the House then devoted itself to the consideration of new Rules of Procedure. The experience of the "Jubilee Session" was fresh in the memory of members. In vain had been all previous cobbling at the rules of debate: all that had been hitherto effected

had served, in the words of Peter Pindar, only to—

“Set wheels on wheels in motion—such a clatter !
To force up one poor nipperkin of matter ;
Bid ocean labour with tremendous roar
To heave a cockle-shell upon the shore.”

It was clear that if any except men gifted with constitutions of iron or india-rubber were to take a full share in legislation, some further modification was necessary, and the House, as a whole, thankfully agreed to a Standing Order bringing its sitting to a close at midnight. The relief afforded by the adoption of this rule was indescribable, but while it did not practically interfere with adequate discussion of measures and votes, it did undoubtedly add to the responsibility of the Chair by making necessary the more frequent application of the closure. The acceptance of Mr Goschen's great scheme for the reduction of interest on the National Debt and the conversion of Consols cleared the way for Mr Ritchie's Local Government Bill, whereby the administrative duties of magistrates in Quarter Sessions were to be almost entirely transferred to elective bodies in the counties. It was a strain upon the allegiance of the older school of Tories to be asked to accept such a sweeping measure of reform at the hands of a Conservative

Administration ; but most members had pledged themselves to the extension of the municipal system to rural districts, and the Government wisely declined to put forward anything short of a genuine and thoroughly popular scheme. With equal wisdom they refrained from attempting a similar measure dealing with Ireland, although Lord Randolph Churchill joined with Mr Gladstone in support of the County Government (Ireland) Bill brought in by Mr Carew.

Meanwhile the Government had to wince under the loss of several seats at by-elections. At Southampton the Unionist majority of 342 had been turned into a Gladstonian one of 885 ; and now the Ayr Burghs followed suit by replacing a Unionist, whose majority at the general election had been 1175, by a Separatist, whom they preferred to the extent of 53 votes to the Hon. Evelyn Ashley.

From the Right Hon. W. H. Smith to Mrs Smith.

May 7, 1888.

. . . I have been *obliged* to accept an appointment on a Royal Commission on the Administration of the Army and the Navy, with Hartington in the chair. Salisbury thought there was no one else to do it from amongst us, and as I can only be at work all day, I may as well do one thing as another. And it is all work in the highest sense of the word, the discharge of duty, and that gives me strength.

· June 25.

. . . I travelled up quite comfortably to-day, and arrived in time at Charing Cross, and then had a good day for work at Downing Street. Letters of course—but nothing very remarkable. Here the debate of censure began with a rather lame speech from J. Morley, which was answered by Goschen. Part of his speech was very effective, and I think the papers will speak very well of it in the morning, but there has been a good deal of warmth on both sides. On the whole, however, I think we have had the best of it. . . . I hope you will get this note before you leave. I had intended to write for the first post, but I could not leave the bench, as the first two speeches occupied three hours.

July 7.

. . . I walked down with Helen, B., and Freddy to Downing Street, after having had visits from the Duke of Cambridge, Lord Harrowby, and Col. Gzowski, so that I had plenty of work, and the day has been full since. Now Harcourt is mouthing, declaiming, and denouncing us in violent language, and the Attorney-General in particular. Good night. God bless and keep you and my dear children! And pray for me every day, that I may have wisdom and strength to do what is right. It is a hard and difficult task.

August 3.

Here I am sitting on the bench listening to Arthur Balfour, who is answering Mr J. Morley, and I have ears for him and thoughts for you and my very dear ones at home at the same time. You see what we did last night. I did not come on to the front bench last night, as my colleagues did not think it necessary, and I was not in a humour to take part in the fray, which was hot and furious. I divided several times, and arranged a great

deal of business in my room, and to-day I am thankful to say the atmosphere is certainly quieter, and we have some hope of winding up either at the end of next week or a day or two later; but it is well not to be too sanguine.

This summer was saddened for the Smiths by the hopeless illness of Rear-Admiral Codrington, the husband of Mr Smith's step-daughter, whom he loved as dearly as if she had been his own child.

To Miss Giberne.

June 3.

Emily¹ went down to Tunbridge Wells yesterday to see Mary and Willie Codrington, and she came back in very great sadness at the great progress decay had made in Willie and the apparent imminence of his death. I am sure you will like to know, that you may pray God to sustain and comfort the wife who is to lose her husband and the children their father.

It is a mysterious thing here. There is a new and apparently a vigorous life begun in Emmie's² boy, who is doing well, and the mother also. She, bright and happy and thankful, and a little way off her own very dear sister is watching by the dying bed of her husband. And of course while this is going on we have to go through our duties.

I had to give a birthday dinner to Prince Albert Victor and a number of Peers and Privy Councillors last night. There was the trooping of the colours in the Park in the morning, which Humphrey and Dolly Codrington came

¹ Mrs Smith.

² His daughter, Mrs W. Acland.

up to see, and a great party at the Foreign Office in the evening.

But all these, as the world is constituted, are matters of duty from which we must not withdraw ourselves in contemplation of bereavement to come. There are also great anxieties in Government—great responsibilities, and who is able for these things? Help us, my dear friend, by prayer. I should be dismayed and faint if it were not that I believe my God is very near to guide and strengthen me, and to give me the wisdom I need, and to comfort and sustain those who are in sorrow and sickness and need. But two or three should ask. The work is heavy and the burden great, and you and others who are far off can ask and believe that you have the petitions which you make.

I am amazed when I look around me and realise some of the causes for thankfulness which exist, and I tremble for myself and for my wife and my children lest any of us should fail to live up to our duty, and to the right use of the talents intrusted to us. . . . All I say is, God help me to do my work, and take me out of it when I am no longer fit for it.

Admiral Codrington's illness ended fatally on July 31.

Before reverting to public affairs, a further quotation may be given from Smith's private correspondence at this time. Lord Stanley of Preston,¹ who had been his colleague ever since Smith entered the Government in 1874, had been appointed Governor-General of Canada.

¹ Now sixteenth Earl of Derby.

Circumstances prevented his meeting with Smith before sailing, so, without any suspicion, it may be believed, that this was to prove their last parting on earth, he wrote his farewell in terms which testify to the feeling between the two men :—

Let an old friend, and a very sincere one, rejoice in your success in & with the House, & in the praise justly given to the Leader whose patience & tact have done much to bring back the good old parliamentary ways of business. . . . Good-bye, my dear Smith—whatever happens one is glad to think that our long personal & political friendship has never been marred by a difference of any kind. I shall always look back to the times when we have worked hard together with something of a better feeling for the political world which gave me such a staunch & kind friend, & such a true & loyal colleague. . . . God bless you.

An action for libel brought by Mr O'Donnell, formerly a Home Rule member of Parliament, against the 'Times,' revived at this time the whole question of the "Parnellism and Crime" papers in their bearing upon the Irish party. On July 6 Mr Parnell rose to make a personal explanation, and repeated his repudiation of the facsimile letter, and repelled the other charges made by the 'Times' writer. Six days later he asked the First Lord of the Treasury if the Government would consent to

the appointment of a Select Committee to go into the question of the authenticity of certain letters read by the Attorney-General at the trial of O'Donnell *v.* Walter. Smith replied that in the opinion of the Government a Select Committee appointed, as was the custom, with reference to party politics, and on the recommendation of the party Whips, was a most improper tribunal to try charges of such gravity; but that he was willing to introduce a bill appointing a Commission, with full power to inquire into the allegations made against certain members of Parliament in the late trial. This bill, he declared, was offered for the acceptance of Mr Parnell and his colleagues, and that the Government were not disposed to press it if it should not be acceptable to the Irish party.

But when introducing the bill on July 16, Smith announced a significant change in the attitude of the Government, who, he said, were now resolved to proceed with it at all hazards. This brought the Cabinet under suspicion of having resolved to make political capital out of the charges against their opponents. Smith was taxed with having received a visit from Mr Walter of the 'Times' while the question was under consideration of the Cabinet, and frankly admitted that he had done so "as an old friend." Upon this

Sir William Harcourt roundly charged the Government with having acted in collusion with the 'Times'—a charge that received poignancy in the fact that the Attorney-General, whose duty it was to give legal advice to the Government, had also been counsel for the 'Times' in the recent trial.

On the whole, the action of the Government in offering and then insisting upon the Commission had hearty approval from the Unionist party, and this feeling was strengthened when it was seen how anxiously the Irish Nationalist members strove to limit the scope of the inquiry. But there was at least one important exception to unanimity in the matter. Lord Randolph Churchill viewed intervention by the Government in the least favourable light, and conveyed to Smith his reasons in an ably drawn Memorandum, which he afterwards described as a "strong but friendly protest against the measure."

The following is the text of the Memorandum:—

It may be assumed that the Tory party are under an imperative obligation to avoid seeking escape from political difficulties by extra-constitutional methods. The above is a general rule. The exception to it can scarcely be conceived.

The case of "Parnellism and Crime" is essentially a political and parliamentary difficulty of a minor kind. A newspaper has made against a group of members of the House of Commons accusations of complicity in assassination, crime, and outrage. In the commencement the parties accused do not feel themselves specially aggrieved. They take no action; the Government responsible for the guidance of the House of Commons does not feel called upon to act in the matter. A member of Parliament, acting on his own responsibility, brings the matter before the House of Commons as a matter of privilege, and a Select Committee is moved for to inquire into the allegations.

The Government take up an unexceptionable and perfectly constitutional position. They refuse the Select Committee on the ground marked out by Sir Erskine May, that matters which may or ought to come within the cognisance of the courts of law are not fit for inquiry by Select Committee.

The Government press upon the accused parties their duty, should they feel themselves aggrieved, to proceed against the newspaper legally, and, with a generosity hardly open to condemnation, offer to make the prosecution of the newspaper, so far as expense is concerned, a Government prosecution. The offer is not accepted, the view of duty is disagreed to by the accused persons, the motion for a Select Committee is negatived, and the matter drops, the balance of disadvantage remaining with the accused persons.

Owing to an abortive and obscurely originated action for libel, the whole matter revives. The original charges are reiterated in a court of law by the Attorney-General, but owing to the course of the suit no evidence is called to sustain the allegations. A fresh demand is made by the accused persons for a Select Committee, and is refused

by the Government on the same grounds as before, and, as before, with a preponderating assent of public opinion. So far all is satisfactory, except to the accused parties and their sympathisers.

For reasons not known, the Government take a new departure of a most serious kind. They offer to constitute by statute a tribunal with exceptional powers, to be composed mainly of judges of the Supreme Court, to inquire into the truth of the allegations. To this course the following objections are obvious and unanswerable:—

1. The offer, to a large extent, recognises the wisdom and justice of the conduct of the accused persons in avoiding recurrence to the ordinary tribunals.

2. It is absolutely without precedent. The Sheffield case—the Metropolitan Board of Works case—are by no means analogous. Into those two cases not a spark of political feeling entered. The case of “Parnellism and Crime” in so far as it is not criminal is entirely political. In any event the political character of the case would predominate over the criminal.

3. It is submitted that it is in the highest degree unwise and, indeed, unlawful to take the judges of the land out of their proper sphere of duty, and to mix them up in political conflict. In this case, whichever way they decide, they will be the object of political criticism and animadversion. Whatever their decision, speaking roughly, half the country will applaud, the other half condemn, their action; their conduct during the trial in its minutest particulars, every ruling as to evidence, every chance expression, every question put by them, will be keenly watched, canvassed, criticised, censured, or praised. Were judges in England ever placed in such a position before? Will any judge emerge from this inquiry the same for all judicial purposes, moral weight, and influence as he went

into it? Have you a right to expose your judges, and in all probability your best judges, to such an ordeal?

4. The tribunal will conduct its proceedings by methods different to a court of law. The examination will mainly be conducted by the tribunal itself; a witness cannot refuse to reply on the ground that the answer would criminate himself. Evidence in this way will be extracted which might be made the basis of a criminal prosecution against other persons. Indemnities might be given to persons actually guilty of very grave crime, and persons much less guilty of direct participation in grave crime might, under such protected evidence, be made liable to a prosecution.

The whole course of proceedings, if the character of the allegations is remembered, will, when carefully considered, be found to be utterly repugnant to our English ideas of legal justice, and wholly unconstitutional. It is hardly exaggerating to describe the Commission contemplated as "a revolutionary tribunal" for the trial of political offenders. If there is any truth in the above, or colour for such a statement, can a Tory Government safely or honourably suggest and carry through such a proposal?

I would suggest that the constitutional legality of this proposed tribunal be submitted to the judges for their opinion.

It is not for the Government, in matters of this kind, to initiate extra-constitutional proceedings and methods. One can imagine an excited Parliament or inflamed public opinion forcing such proceedings on a Government. In this case there is no such pressure. The first duty of a Government would be to resist being driven outside the lines of the Constitution. In no case, except when public safety is involved, can they be justified in taking the lead. They are the chief guardians of the Constitution. The

Constitution is violated or strained in this country when action is taken for which there is no reasonably analogous precedent. Considerations of this kind ought to influence powerfully the present Government.

It is said that the honour of the House of Commons is concerned. This is an empty phrase. The tribunal, whatever its decision, will not prevent the Irish constituencies from returning as representatives the parties implicated. In such an event the honour of the House of Commons could only be vindicated by repeated expulsion, followed by disfranchisement. Does any reasonable person contemplate such a course?

The proceedings of the tribunal cannot be final. In the event of a decision to the effect that the charges are not established, proceedings for libel against the newspaper might be resorted to, the newspaper being placed under a most grossly unjust disadvantage. In the event of a decision to the contrary effect, a criminal prosecution would seem to be imperative. Regarded from the high ground of State policy in Ireland, such a prosecution would probably be replete with danger and disaster.

These reflections have been sketched out concisely. If submitted to a statesman, or to any one of great legal learning and attainments, many more and much graver reflections would probably be suggested.

I do not examine the party aspects of the matter; I only remark that the fate of the Union may be determined by the abnormal proceedings of an abnormal tribunal. Prudent politicians would hesitate to go out of their way to play such high stakes as these. R. H. S. C.

July 17, 1888.

The Charges and Allegations Bill passed through both Houses, and the Commission met

on October 17. "The proceedings," as a contemporary chronicler observes, "speedily assumed the appearance of a case in which the 'Times' appeared as plaintiff and the Irish members as defendants." But the presence of the Attorney-General as leading counsel for the 'Times,' and of Sir Charles Russell for the Irish members, gave the trial all the appearance of an impeachment or indictment of Mr Parnell and his colleagues by the Government. And unfortunately the popular impression prevailed that the existence of the Ministry depended on the charges being substantiated.

It is pleasant to turn from the dreary and harassing records of official life to one of those little incidents reflecting colour from a more ancient and leisurely social system, such as occurs in the following correspondence with the Maharajah Holkar, whom Smith had received at dinner in Grosvenor Place :—

INDORE PALACE, 14th March 1888.

DEAR SIR,—In token of friendship, I send, as usual, a few Tilli seeds for you to taste on the occasion of the New Year of the Hindus, whose belief is that by so doing the bonds of our friendship will become strengthened.

Hoping that you are in the enjoyment of good health,—
I am, yours sincerely, SHINAGEE RAO HOLKAR.

The Right Honourable W. H. SMITH, M.P. London.

3 GROSVENOR PLACE,
LONDON, S.W., 9th July 1888.

MY FRIEND,—I have received with much pleasure, through her Majesty's Secretary of State for India, the kind letter from your Highness of the 14th March, together with the packet of Tilli seeds which accompanied it. I have eaten of the latter, and I need not say that I highly appreciate this proof of your Highness' friendship for me. . . .—I have the honour to remain, your Highness' faithful friend,

W. H. SMITH.

To his Highness the MAHARAJAH HOLKAR.

Parliament, which had been adjourned on August 13, was to meet again in November to finish up the work of the session. Speaking at the Mansion House on August 8, the Prime Minister alluded to this in that vein of irony in which he so much excels. "It is impossible," he said, "not to feel that the wisdom of Parliament is great, and that the eloquence of Parliament is great; but the eloquence is getting in the way of the wisdom."

Smith joined his wife at Aix-les-Bains, where she had gone for the benefit of her health, and he wrote thence in good spirits on September 1 to his youngest daughter, Mrs A. Acland, with suggestions for the names to be given to her baby.

Wilhelmina Henrietta Frederica—quite lovely—but lovelier still if you add Beatricia Alfrida—Skeggs. My

dear, I am glad your spirits are good, and I hope they will be better when you have received this brilliant suggestion for the names of the granddaughter. I am going deliberately to set to work to spoil and make her quite an anxiety to her Parents. . . . There are all sorts of people here, but I am not much amused with them. Some of the Americans are astonishing. It is difficult to believe they are not large butterflies. Their colors are as brilliant, and some of the loose things they wear resemble wings, but they have feet and they have voices, which butterflies have not. Yesterday Lord Hartington came to see me, dressed as a seedy, shady sailor, but he sat down and talked politics for half an hour, and he said it was pleasant in a place like this to have some work to do.

On his return to England, Smith took a full share in those platform labours which the growing practice of these latter days has made more and more oppressive upon public men. In doing this he was acting against the advice of his doctors, and had also to overcome his own misgivings as to his oratorical power.

I have been sent [he writes to Mr Penrose Fitzgerald] by the Whips to Gloucester, and I am going for the same masters to Salford. This is all I can do before 6th Nov^r, and after that date I really do not know what I can do. My present impression is that I ought not to speak anywhere at all: old Jenner¹ is very strong against it. I cannot believe that a speech of mine would help

¹ Sir William Jenner, Bart., G.C.B., M.D.

any fellow, but I would rather give you a lift up than any other man in the House.

Among Mr Smith's papers there has been preserved a cutting from the 'Birmingham Daily Post' of October 10, 1888, commenting upon a discrepancy between the report of his speech at Gloucester given in the 'Times,' and those reports which appeared in other papers. The writer observed that no doubt "Mr Smith, according to custom, gave the manuscript of his address to the 'Times' representative beforehand, and was so affected by his feelings of gratitude to the Liberal-Unionists as he went on that he added the sentence to which attention has been drawn." The sentence referred to was one in which he expressed his willingness to retire in favour of a Liberal-Unionist leader, if that would strengthen the Unionist party, and the journalist went on to point out that this was only another illustration of the danger incurred by a political leader, when he not only writes his speech but hands it to the reporters in advance. The moral, however, was wasted in this instance, for Smith has written the following comment in red ink in the margin—"Amusing. I never wrote out a speech in my life, and could not do it.—W. H. S."

After speaking at Salford on October 23, Smith spent the next day going over the works of the

Manchester Ship Canal ; and on the 25th he performed the ceremony of opening the Tees break-water, thus fulfilling an engagement under which he had long been to Sir Joseph Pease, M.P. On the 27th he went on to Edinburgh :—

I *am* thankful the functions are over, but every one has been most kind. They have been at pains to be civil. Our day at the Forth Bridge has been most interesting. You will realise its magnitude when I tell you that the span of the arch from one abutment to the other covers a distance, at a height of 300 feet in the centre from the water, which is as far as from Grosvenor Place to Buckingham Palace ! Sir John and Lady Fowler were very attentive and kind, showing and explaining everything that was possible in the two hours and a half that we were on the works. They gave Helen a complete set of photographs of the work, which will greatly interest A. ; and then, after a good luncheon, we drove to Lord Hope-toun's, at their request, Lord and Lady H. having met us on the bridge, and he drove us through the grounds adjacent to the house in a little trap with four Shetland ponies, which went at a tremendous pace. The grounds, the trees, the views of the Forth and of the distant hills beyond, were very lovely, although the day was dark and very windy. We dined at six in Edinburgh, and joined the train at 7.30, a carriage being reserved for us ; and although I told no one of my journey, they seemed to have heard of it at Berwick, and when the train stopped there for five minutes, I was asked if my name was W. H. Smith, and when I said Yes, some twenty people gave a cheer, and I was told they were local Conservatives, who had come to the station to do me honor.

It was hoped when Parliament reassembled on November 6 that the business remaining over would be quickly got through, but the introduction of a bill to extend the purchase powers of Lord Ashbourne's Irish Land Act roused the ire of the Opposition, who prolonged the debates on Supply, in order to thwart the benevolent intentions of the Government towards Ireland. By Lord Ashbourne's Act, passed in 1885, five millions had been advanced for the purchase of their holdings by tenants. It had been a complete success: of the £90,000 of instalments accruing for repayment on the sums advanced, only £1100 was in arrear. It was now proposed to increase the sum for buying out the Irish landlords from 5 to 10 millions. The fight over the bill was a hard one, and the Prorogation was not achieved till Christmas Eve.

Smith's health had suffered so much from these prolonged proceedings that on December 15 he was obliged to leave for the South of Europe, where he remained till February 4, 1889.

CHAPTER X.

1889.

SMITH OFFERS TO RESIGN LEADERSHIP—LETTER TO MR GIFFEN
ON DEPRECIATION OF GOLD—MODIFICATION OF PARTIES IN-
TO GROUPS—DEBATE ON THE ADDRESS—DIFFICULTIES OF
THE GOVERNMENT—ADDRESS OF CONFIDENCE PRESENTED TO
SMITH BY MINISTERIALISTS—IS ENTERTAINED AT A BANQUET
IN THE CITY—AND AT ANOTHER GIVEN BY HIS CONSTITU-
ENTS—IS PRESENTED WITH THE FREEDOM OF KIRKWALL—
HIS SON COMES OF AGE—CONSECRATION OF ST MARY'S,
PORTSEA—SMITH ADDRESSES MEETINGS IN GLASGOW, EXETER,
AND PLYMOUTH.

THAT which distinguished Smith more than any-
thing else among the common run of politicians
was the constancy with which he kept in view
the interests of the country and of that party by
which he believed the country might best be
served, to the absolute exclusion of his own
career. The following correspondence is an ex-
ample of this.

Private.

MARSEILLES, *Feb.* 3, 1889.

MY DEAR SALISBURY,—You referred a few days ago
to the violence and unscrupulousness of the Opposition,

and to their readiness to avail themselves of any weapon which they may find ready to their hands, no matter what the consequences may be.

The extension of the suffrage has brought us face to face with the most grave possibilities. It has made the extreme Radicals masters of the Liberal party, and men support a policy now from which they would have shrunk with horror ten years ago. There is also this strange peculiarity in the English mind to be taken into account. Men who are strictly honest in their transactions with their neighbours have come to regard Parliament as an instrument by which a transfer of rights and property may equitably be made from the few to the many; and there is yet another feature of the present day which is disgusting, and that is, that familiarity with crimes against property, or a class which is not their class, gradually deprives these crimes of the nature of crime in the eyes of the multitude, and even seems to create a sympathy for them.

To deal with public affairs with such an Opposition and in such a state of the public mind, the Government requires the judgment, resource, and eloquence of the strongest men that can be found in the House of Commons and in the Country.

I do not think it possible to exaggerate the gravity of the struggle in which we are engaged, and I have never disguised from you my view that in such a fight it is really the duty of the chief to put those men in the most prominent position who are best fitted to do the work. I am much stronger for my holiday, but I am not more ready of speech than I was, nor am I likely to be; and I am therefore most anxious you should thoroughly understand that, whether my health be good or bad, I am quite ready to give place to another leader, as a

simple matter of duty for the good of the country, now or whenever it appears to you desirable to make a change.

I shall not refer again to the matter when we meet, unless you do so. I am with you where I am as long as you really think it best on all accounts that I should remain, and no longer.—Yours very sincerely,

W. H. SMITH.

This letter was forwarded to the Queen with the following note in Lord Salisbury's handwriting added to it in red ink :—

Lord Salisbury has written to Mr Smith to say that, in his judgment, it would cause the gravest prejudice to your Majesty's service if Mr Smith were to retire from the leadership of the House.

There was no ambiguity or hesitation in Lord Salisbury's rejoinder to Smith's offer :—

Private.

Feb. 5, 1889.

MY DEAR SMITH,—I am very sensible of the generous and considerate spirit in which your letter is written, & I thank you heartily for it. But if you had heard the general expression of consternation with which the apparent failure of your health was watched by the principal men of the party, you would have had no doubt that in their judgment your retirement from the lead in the House of Commons would be one of the heaviest blows that could befall it.

I agree in all you say as to the gravity of our present condition. We are in a state of bloodless civil war. No common principles, no respect for common institutions

or traditions, unite the various groups of politicians who are struggling for power. To loot somebody or something is the common object, under a thick varnish of pious phrases. So that our lines are not cast in pleasant places.
—Yours very truly,
SALISBURY.

Some rumour of Smith's readiness to retire may have reached his constituents: indeed paragraphs appeared in the newspapers announcing that he did not intend to seek re-election. Somebody wrote to ask if this was the case, and his reply through his secretary shows conclusively that, though willing to resign his leadership or his seat in the Cabinet, he had no intention of leaving the House of Commons, either by accepting a Peerage, as the gossips had it, or by retiring into private life:—

Mr Smith wishes me to assure you that unless he actually breaks down in health, he has no intention of resigning his seat.

On the contrary, he hopes to offer himself again at the next general election.

He thinks it would be well if you would let his friends know this, if there is any doubt on the subject.

Anxiety about his own health did not prevail to withdraw Smith from the consideration and discussion of far-reaching problems. During these holidays he was occupied among other things in a correspondence with the eminent

statistician, Mr (now Sir Henry) Giffen, as to the causes of the alarming depreciation in prices which had told so seriously upon British commerce and agriculture. As a clear exposition of his views on a momentous subject, acquired during a long and close connection with trade, the following letter may be found to be of interest:—

Private.

MONTE CARLO, *Jan'y.* 7, 1889.

DEAR MR GIFFEN,—I have to thank you for so kindly sending me your paper on the appreciation of gold and the recent changes in prices and incomes.

It is no doubt due to my want of scientific training and perception, but I still remain unable to connect the changes in prices with any appreciation in gold. My impression is that there has never been a period in modern days when, concurrently with the alleged scarcity of gold, there has been a greater abundance of money made available by banking and financial facilities for stimulating the production of commodities of every kind, and if statistical information is available it would, I am sure, be found that in all parts of the world the amount of money credit or capital, whatever you like to call the conventional currency which has been employed, advanced by bankers and others for these purposes has been far greater during the last ten years than in any corresponding period of the world's history.

I should be disposed to say that this world-wide extension of banking, and the savings of the present generation seeking profitable employment, have much more to do with the fall in prices and profits than any possible idea—

for it is little more than an idea to most men of business—that gold is appreciated or its assumed purchasing power become greater. In my younger days a prudent saving man looked to a 5 per cent interest on an investment as a rate which he was entitled to obtain with good security, and the profits in trade and agriculture were very much in proportion to the returns from investments; but accumulations of savings have gradually brought down the return from safe investments to 3 and $3\frac{1}{2}\%$, and so indeed, by reason of its very abundance, money instead of buying more, buys less—brings a less return in income to its possessor: and in a corresponding degree men employing money in the production of commodities run greater risks for smaller profits than in times past, and compete with each other with much narrower margins, but going farther afield, with greater areas and increased machinery of all kinds, looking for an aggregate profit on quantity to compensate them for a diminished return on the article.

And this reduction in profits has enormously stimulated improvement in processes and inventions. Steel and iron are produced with less coal and fewer men per ton than was the case a few years ago. The men actually employed get the same or even higher wages than they used to do; but in the works where modern appliances are used with skill and vigilance, there is reason to believe that profits are made; but prices cannot rise to any great extent, because there is dormant capital, blast furnaces lying idle, ready at once to compete for any small additional profit that may be obtainable on any increase in demand.

But if you take natural products, such as wheat, you would, I think, find that the fall in prices was largely owing to the opening up by railways and steamers of new sources of supply to the markets of the Old World. The Indian ryot can, I believe, live on 4d. a day, and

his labour does not enter very largely into the cost of production; but until the Indian railways made it possible for his surplus produce to reach the sea, it did not affect any European market however cheap it might be. Freights are about one-third of what they were ten years ago; and it now costs less to bring a quarter of wheat from any port in America to Liverpool or London than to cart it from a farm 12 or 15 miles from a market. Practically, the whole producing surface of the earth is brought by railways, telegraph, and steam vessels within touch with our markets; and these changes have been effected so noiselessly, while we have all been going about our own business, that we have not been conscious of the tremendous economical revolution which has been effected.

And the same forces are in operation with regard to sugar, to wool, to timber: cheap money, cheap labour, and cheap transit all combine to produce a greater supply of such commodities at any prices which will leave a margin of profit.

But when you come to those articles of commerce the production of which is limited, and cannot be rapidly extended by capital or enterprise—as, *e.g.*, good French wines, or indeed any other good wine, or works of art—it will be found that prices are higher than they were ten years ago; that the purchasing power of money or gold is less than it was; and that for everything of which the production or supply is nearly a constant quantity there is an increased demand, because there is an increase in the number of persons who are able to buy, and who have money at command. And if gold is money and money is gold, then gold for these purposes has undergone a process of depreciation instead of appreciation.

It would of course be a very different matter if there was any doubt as to the convertibility of the conventional

currency into gold, or of its being practically equal in value to gold; but a good cheque or note has been in England and in our Colonies of precisely the same value as gold at any time during the period of which you treat.

It is simply a standard of value, and although it is necessary to maintain a certain reserve of the metal to assure the world of the convertibility of our currency into gold, and the rate of interest may rise and fall as the quantity at command becomes less or more, there is little chance, I venture to think, that gold, as gold, will be "appreciated," so long as our commercial system rests on a sound basis.

I am afraid you will think me a heretic or ignorant, but I adhere to the belief that a slight excess of supply over demand, a competition of sellers, lowers prices—and a slight deficiency, as in the case of the coal famine, increases prices—out of all proportion to the measure of the real excess or deficiency. The cure for low prices is the disappearance of profits, and of the capital which has been employed in production; but if there is still an accumulation of capital—unspent profits—going on, it will seek employment at any rates of interest in stimulating the production of the necessaries of life all over the world.

The farmer and the landed proprietors have lost capital and income which they may not regain; but the community are still on the whole richer and increasing the stock of money, which is as good as gold, while sufficient gold is found to maintain the standard of value.

Whether in times of stress and doubt and financial distrust our present stock of gold is sufficient to maintain the convertibility of our paper money is quite another matter.

Individually, I think the amount of the ballast some-

what dangerously low for the financial ship for bad weather, but that is another question altogether.—Believe me, yours very truly.

W. H. SMITH.

R. GIFFEN, Esq., LL.D., Board of Trade.

Smith was subject to great depression and gloomy foreboding about the future course of events in England. A friend with whom he was walking one day asked him if he intended to put his son Frederick into Parliament.

“No,” replied Smith, “I shall certainly not put him there. Let him get acquainted with business first, and then it is possible events may lead him into Parliament, but I shall not set it before him as an object. England,” he continued, in a tone of great gravity, “is going to be governed by three classes of men,—by roughs, by men of business, and by those aristocrats who have heads on their shoulders, and can use them. Freddy is not a rough, and he is not an aristocrat; if he is to go into Parliament, let him become a good man of business first.”

When Smith returned to take command of the allied forces of Ministerialists, there were signs in Parliament of a change from the traditions of government by party. It seemed as if the hazardous system of government by groups, so prevalent in the democratic legislatures of other countries, was about to establish itself at West-

minster. That the policy of the Conservative Cabinet had already been notably modified and broadened in deference to their Liberal-Unionist supporters, had been abundantly manifest in their Local Government Act, and was to be made still more apparent during the session of 1889 by the similar Act for Scotland, wherein it was provided that £246,000 a-year, derived from probate and licence duties, should be applied to making education gratuitous in public elementary schools, thus carrying into effect a favourite cry of the Radical party. But if the Ministerialists were classified in two groups, each with its separate organisation and Whips, the Opposition, already made up of Gladstonians and Parnellites, was henceforward to have a third leader in the person of Mr Henry Labouchere, who placed himself at the head of the advance party of Radicals, named "Jacobins," after Mr Jacoby, one of their Whips. Hitherto it had been part of the recognised symbolism of the House of Commons that, while members in general wore their hats in the Chamber and precincts of the House, the Whips, whose duties lie for the most part in the lobbies, should perform their functions bareheaded. The multiplication of parties involved the multiplication of Whips; so the unfamiliar sight was now witnessed of a number of gentlemen — Conservatives, Liberal

Unionists, Gladstonians, Parnellites, and Jacobins—going about bareheaded ; a trivial phenomenon, it may seem, yet significant of the change which the times had wrought in the old party discipline.

It was to be a “Scotch session”—so it was said ; but in the treatment of Mr O’Brien, M.P., in prison, where, having refused to don the prison garb, he had been deprived, not without stratagem, of his normal habiliments, was found sufficient material for the Opposition to carry on a debate in both Houses upon the Address. As Lord Salisbury remarked in the Lords, it was really very difficult for any one to preserve a sufficiently tragic air over “Mr O’Brien struggling for his clothes, or Mr Harrington mourning over his moustache.”

During the debate in the Commons remarkable evidence was given of the effusive confidence now established between ex-Ministers and the Irish Nationalists. When Mr Parnell rose to speak he was received with prolonged cheering—all the Opposition, including the front bench, standing up and waving their hats. The amendment under discussion, moved by Mr John Morley, was rejected by 339 to 260 votes, showing a majority of 79 for Ministers.

The Government had undoubtedly sustained a severe shock in the breakdown before the Parnell

Commission of the most serious charges made against the Irish members. The celebrated facsimile letter had been pronounced to be the copy of a forgery by the worthless Pigott, and, rightly or wrongly, the Government were held responsible for having entertained a belief in its genuineness. Their Attorney-General, in accepting a brief for the 'Times,' had acted according to professional precedent; nevertheless, he had thereby involved his colleagues in the Ministry in the appearance of partiality, and of giving undue facilities to one of the parties in the trial. Naturally, the most of this was made by Opposition speakers both in and out of Parliament, and the result on by-elections was distinctly unfavourable to Government. The attack in the House upon the Attorney-General was led by Mr W. Redmond, who moved to reduce his salary by £1000; but the motion was thrown out by a majority of 80 votes.

Smith felt the anxiety of all this very keenly, and his health began to give serious warning of the strain upon it. To Miss Giberne he wrote on February 24:—

I have just entered in a sense on my New Year of anxious work and responsibility. . . . I have never felt myself strong enough for the work I have to do, and I should not have dreamt of putting myself forward for

it. It is a burden and an anxiety, a cross, but it is difficult sometimes to see for one's self the plain line of duty. Is one fit or unfit for the work? or is the burden of responsibility and care, which is heavy where there is no personal ambition to help a man to bear it, warping one's judgment and making one long to escape and be at rest? Perhaps it is; at all events I will wait patiently and go on with my daily task until the change comes.

"In quietness and confidence shall be my strength;" but who can be strong enough in himself in these days for the work which falls to me?

I would say with Solomon, "Give me now wisdom and knowledge," so long as it pleaseth Thee to continue me as Thy servant in the work which Thou hast given me to do. But, my dear friend, how can I tell that my judgment or decision is the wisdom I long for and desire to apply for the good of the country? I cannot tell. All sorts of human frailties, prejudices, and passions are always passing like mists through a man's mind. But I can say, God help me; and "in quietness and confidence shall be my strength." He will take me out of my work when I am no longer required, and then will come rest. Meanwhile you, my friend, can help me.

On March 17 he wrote to Mrs W. Acland:—

We have trouble in politics, and I am very weary; but I must go on doing my daily work as best I can, looking for guidance and wisdom where alone it can be had, until my rest comes. I hope it is not wrong to long for it.

His friends began to take alarm lest he should break down altogether. Dr Acland¹ wrote from

¹ Created Sir Henry Wentworth Acland, Bart., K.C.B., in 1890.

Oxford on April 29, in the double character of physician and friend:—

MY DEAR SMITH,—I cannot help breaking silence now your short rest is over to send you my expression of earnest desire, nay, prayer, that you may have strength for your work, or resolution to break from it. . . . Two things are believed by me—1st, that owing to the firm, steady, quiet determination of the Government, the country is becoming more calm, and less moved by exaggeration & misconduct; and 2d, that you might relinquish the “leadership,” and otherwise remain the same. These are the opinions of a quiet John Bull, without, of course, any special knowledge or opportunity. Said John Bull is not an optimist, for in truth I think the problem of human affairs in general, and this nation in particular, becomes more *intricate* than ever. . . . Always gratefully yours,

HY. W. ACLAND.

On the other hand, encouragement to persevere was not wanting. Rumours of Smith’s retirement from public life having been persistently circulated, his followers determined to express the warmth of feeling towards him which pervaded their ranks. Accordingly, on March 28, the Right Hon. Sir John Mowbray, Sir John Colomb, and Mr Robert Hanbury waited on him in his private room at the House of Commons and presented the following address, signed by 254 unofficial members of Parliament:—

As members of the Conservative party, we desire to express to you our cordial appreciation of the manner in

which, in the face of extraordinary difficulties, you have acted as leader of the House of Commons; and recognising the great importance to the country and the party of your leadership, we trust that this assurance of full confidence and hearty support will in some measure assist you in the continued discharge of your high, but most arduous, duty.

Smith's reply was brief and simple: after expressing gratitude for the support and encouragement conveyed in the address, he assured his hearers that, as long as his health would permit, and so long as he retained the confidence of his friends, he would continue to fulfil the duties of his office.

Many friends wrote warmly concurring in this mark of confidence. Sir Rainald Knightley's¹ letter ran as follows:—

I was not aware until I saw it in the 'Times' that the address to you was to be presented by the oldest member of our party in the House of Commons. Had I known it, I should have made a point of going up to London to assert my sad precedence, for it would have given me the greatest pleasure to have presented a resolution with which I so heartily and cordially concurred.

To this Smith replied:—

The whole affair came upon me as a surprise. I had no idea until a day or two before I received the memorial that my friends were signing anything of the kind, and

¹ Created Baron Knightley in 1892.

I suppose it was due to the rumours which had got abroad as to my health and my desire to retire.

I am very grateful for your kindness. Mowbray, who came with Hanbury and Colomb, spoke of you as his senior, and indeed for you, in the few words which were interrupted by the division-bell. It is very reassuring to know that, making no attempt at oratory and indeed avoiding anything of the kind, I meet the present necessities of the party in the House.

While they want me I am bound to stay and do the work to the best of my ability, but there are moments, as you can well imagine, when one would be glad to disappear altogether from the wild turmoil of faction, and find rest in obscurity for the remainder of one's life.

To Admiral Sir Alexander Milne, Smith replied :—

It has always been interesting to me to do work for the country, but every post which I have filled in succession, from my first appointment as Secretary to the Treasury in 1874 up to the present time, has been offered to or imposed upon me. I could not apply and have not applied for office at any time, but I have not felt myself at liberty to shrink from it when I have been called upon to undertake it.

My particular work now is far less congenial to me than the Administration of a great Department, and I have often felt faint and sick at the prospect before the country with the furious rage of faction in the House of Commons, and I have greatly doubted my own especial fitness for the part I have to play in the struggle; but I am "on duty," and I must go on as long as I can and do my best. In due time I shall be relieved.

This ceremony was shortly followed by a more public manifestation of the esteem Smith had won from his fellow-countrymen. On April 10 he was entertained at a banquet given in the Merchant Taylors' Hall by merchants, bankers, and business men connected with the City. In addressing the very numerous assembly, Smith approached more nearly to eloquence than he was often able to do.

My friend Mr Gibbs [the chairman] has spoken of the circumstances under which I was placed in the position I now occupy. He has told you that I stepped into the breach to discharge a duty which was imposed upon me. I simply responded to the call which was made upon me by my colleagues and friends, who told me that my services were required in that position. I claim no honour for doing that which was simply an Englishman's duty under the circumstances in which he found himself, and it is one of the mysteries of my life—one of those things which I have been unable to solve for myself—how it is that, having proceeded from among you, being one of you—a man of business—I have now come to be placed in a position of great responsibility, and perhaps of authority. God knows, I did not seek that position for myself. I have never sought office or honour, but I have never felt myself at liberty to decline to undertake a duty which has been imposed upon me. My lords and gentlemen, when I come to consider what it is that I am called upon to do I may well be conscious of inability to discharge fitly the task imposed upon me. I find myself placed in the position of leader of the first Legislative Assembly in the

world, of that which has been, so to speak, the cradle of the liberties of this country. . . . I say most feelingly that if at times there has been weariness, if at times a sense of disgust at the difficulties with which one has to contend in the absence of that complete devotion to the country which one has a right to look for in the representatives of the people—if there has been that feeling at times, circumstances like these—the appreciation of one's fellow-citizens, the sense that they desire to do honour to one who had no expectation of receiving it, the sense that the verdict of his fellow-citizens is that he has deserved well of his country,—all this is a reward amply sufficient to cover all the sacrifices, all the sorrows, all the difficulties through which he has passed.

Lord Cranbrook, in speaking to one of the toasts, made a happy hit in political prophecy. His place at table was between Mr Smith and Mr Arthur Balfour, and he alluded to himself as “standing between the present and the future.” He little knew how soon the younger man was to step into the place of the elder, as Leader of the House of Commons.

There was more to come: Smith's own constituents were determined not to be outdone by the Conservative party in the House of Commons and his friends in the City, so on July 3 they also entertained him at a banquet in St James's Hall, and presented him with an address.

One more mark of special honour was to be shown to the First Lord of the Treasury during

this year, in a most unlikely place and unexpected way. It is necessary, in order to mention it here, to pass over the events of the session of Parliament, which, indeed, offer little upon which it is important to dwell.¹ It took place in a scene very different from the clattering, crowded precincts of Westminster, or the thronged thoroughfares of the City. It was among the melancholy green islands of Orkney, whither the Pandora had carried her owner and his family overseas on which the silence of late summer still brooded, to seek solitude and repose. When the yacht arrived at Kirkwall, the worthy Provost, who kept the principal shop in the town, perceived the opportunity for his ancient burgh to do honour where he rightly believed honour was due. Hastily summoning his bailies together,

¹ *From the Right Hon. W. H. Smith to Sir Henry Acland.*

August 23.

. . . I hope you have not followed our parliamentary work. It has been very dreary—a very poor kind of acting or making-believe. All this week we have had Ireland to the fore—indignant patriots declaiming in burning language of violent indignation at one moment, and the next laughing in their cheeks [*sic*] at the hollowness of the whole performance. And this is the working of the British constitution in 1889, and a scientific system of Government! but perhaps it is as good in its results as anything that could be devised—only it is impossible not to recognise an enormous waste of power and vital strength, which might conceivably be applied to better uses in the interests of the country. Forgive me: I am inclined to be despondent sometimes.”

they agreed unanimously to offer the freedom of their town to their distinguished visitor. Time pressed; Mr Smith and his party were persuaded by the Provost to make an excursion in the interior of the narrow domain: they were waylaid on their return and carried off to the Town Hall, where, in presence of the Town Council, Provost Peace handed the burgess's ticket to the First Lord. "Very amusing," runs Miss Helen Smith's note on the occasion, "and more or less alarming, for we were quite unprepared and very untidy!" Taken thus unawares, Smith was not without fitting words of acknowledgment:—

I came here with my family, seeking the rest and refreshment which are to be found in this northern region, after a period of toil and anxiety which I think justified the desire for rest. . . . When the Provost met me in the Cathedral, he found a stranger who admired, valued, and respected the memorials of the past, which you have preserved with such loving care and fidelity. . . . I thank you, because you have not made this distinction one which is attached to a particular party or creed, and because you have honoured one who has simply been the servant of the country and the servant of his Queen, in the discharge of the duty which has fallen upon him from day to day. Every one has duties to perform: every one of you has the sense of what is right and what is wrong: and it is the sense of what, humbly speaking, I believe to be right which has carried me through so many difficulties.

Before closing the record of Smith's work in the House of Commons during 1889, independent testimony to his success as a parliamentary leader may be quoted from the pen of a well-known parliamentary chronicler,¹ who, though a stout adherent of Mr Gladstone in all his labyrinthine courses, and for a time editor of the 'Daily News,' yet possesses the intellectual detachment essential to true criticism:—

After Lord Randolph Churchill came Mr W. H. Smith, a more striking transformation-scene even than the appearance of Sir Stafford Northcote in the seat of Mr Disraeli. It is no secret that Mr Smith was selected for the office, not because he was at the time the best man, but because he was the best possible man. . . . He has now held the post through three sessions, and has worked upon the House of Commons the same charm which operated to his advancement in the inner councils of the Conservative leaders. The House, it is true, sometimes laughs at him. But there is nothing malicious in the merriment, for it recognises in him an honest, kindly, able man, who, free from all pretension, unaided by personal prestige or family influence, has conducted the business of the House of Commons with a success that will bear comparison with any equal period of time under more famous leaders.

On returning from Scotland, Smith busied himself with preparations for the festivities to be

¹ Mr H. W. Lucy, known to thousands of readers as 'Punch's' Dog Toby.

held on his estates in Suffolk in celebration of Mr Frederick Smith, his only son, attaining his majority.

Another important ceremony in which Smith was deeply concerned took place at Portsea on October 10, when the new parish church of St Mary's was consecrated. The part which Smith had borne in building this fine church to completion has already been told.

On November 4 Smith paid a visit to Sir Archibald¹ and the Hon. Lady Campbell at Blythswood—a mansion of which the hospitality has been experienced by almost every one who has taken an active part in the politics of Lowland Scotland. Next day he attended a Conservative conference in Glasgow, and in the evening addressed an immense meeting in St Andrew's Hall. The Conservative party in Glasgow have hitherto made but indifferent headway against the enormous Irish vote in that city; nevertheless, it contains many of the leading citizens, and it had, before Smith's visit, received a strong reinforcement of Liberal-Unionists.² To the thoughtful, practical Conservatism of this great northern city Smith's reputation for busi-

¹ Created Baron Blythswood in 1892.

² At the general election of 1885 all the seven seats returned Liberal representatives; in 1886, and again in 1892, three out of the seven seats were captured by the Unionist party.

ness-like qualities and resolute common-sense made him peculiarly acceptable, and he was received with a degree of enthusiasm which a more powerful platform orator might have failed to excite. His speech was worthy of his reputation. It contained an earnest protest against the doctrine of opportunism:—

Allow me to draw your attention to a peculiarity in these days which attaches to politicians. They say: “It is not a question whether we think disestablishment is right, or nationalisation of land is right, or confiscation of houses is right, or the equal distribution of property is right; but the question is whether the majority of the people of the country wish it to be so; and if they do, of course it must come to pass, and we will offer no opposition—in other words, we will facilitate the progress of measures which in our consciences we believe to be destructive and injurious, of which we personally disapprove, but which nevertheless must pass, because the people will it.” Now I am very far indeed from saying that the people through their representatives ought not to have expression given to their desires. But this is a new doctrine. A politician, a statesman, whose duty it is to lead, not to follow, whose duty it is to have a definite view on questions of the highest importance to the people at large, whose duty it is to instruct the people—I say it is a new doctrine, and a very evil one, that a politician being placed in the post of leader, abdicates that position, and follows where he ought to guide. I say that in old times in the House of Commons, . . . if a man could not stay a movement which he believed to be wrong, he did not place himself at the head of it and

lead on to the attainment of the object of which he disapproved. He stepped on one side. He said: "I will have nothing whatever to do with it. I cannot interfere with you. I cannot prevent the attainment of this, which I believe to be wrong, but I will at all events leave it to you or others to take that course which you think right." . . . A course of that kind would have an enormous influence over the masses of the people, who have right instincts, and who desire to be taught and led; who, instead of being led by statesmen, are led nowadays by demagogues, or by persons who, as I said just now, give away liberally the property of others without sacrificing their own.

All this is excellent, and worthy of serious consideration by any one who mixes with public affairs; but the philosophic student of history will recognise a fallacy in the proposition that there is anything new in politicians setting their sails to suit whatever popular breeze may be blowing, regardless of the course they ought to steer. Smith often referred with regret to the narrowness of his education. He cannot have forgotten "Not this man, but Barabbas!" but he may be excused if there were not present to his mind instances in the decadence of an empire only second in magnitude to that of Great Britain, when the Roman rulers, to keep the people in good-humour, and to secure their support, conferred on them—not free education, but free bread and free baths. The only question to

which, in all ages, such politicians as are determined at all hazards to maintain their influence will seek for an answer is, In what class resides the power? And to that class they will be prepared to sacrifice the rights and interests of every other.

On November 19 Smith was at the opposite end of the kingdom addressing a meeting at Exeter, and another at Truro on the 21st. On the 25th he spoke at Plymouth, after which he returned to Greenlands to get a few weeks of well-earned repose before facing the labours of another year. This was interrupted by a summons to Windsor Castle, whence he wrote on December 5 to Miss Giberne :—

I have been intending to write to you for a long time, but I have to confess that I have been growing idle lately, and that it has required some effort—a little mental flogging—to make my hands and my head co-operate to do anything more than the pressing necessary work of the day. We had a telegram this morning asking me to dine and sleep, and Emily¹ also, if she was not afraid of the cold. It was very considerate of her Majesty, was it not? . . . Have you been told of our western journey? I took Emily and Helen with me for speeches I had to make at Exeter, Truro, and Plymouth.

We stayed the first night at Lord Poltimore's, and on our return to his house, four miles from Exeter, the Con-

¹ Mrs Smith.

servatives escorted us by a torchlight procession and bands of music to the confines of the city. Everybody was very kind. It was the first thing of the kind Emily had seen. I then went on to Plymouth with them, and we all stayed with the Mount Edgecumbes. Neither Emily nor Helen went with me to Truro; but the Cornishmen were as kind to me as the Devonians, and I wound up on my return to Mount Edgecumbe by a short speech at Plymouth, and we got home on Wednesday week after 8 days' visiting.

Since then I have been in London almost every day, "clearing up," as on Tuesday Freddy comes down from Oxford, and we are to have people in the house and parties, to celebrate for Greenlands his coming of age last August.

It is a very great blessing to know that, although he has not the reputation of being clever or smart, he has that of being a really good fellow, and everybody, from the Head of his college down to the freshman, speaks of him with respect, and often with affection. I cannot—we cannot—be too thankful that we have been spared sorrows and troubles in our family. No one of them has yet given us a moment's anxiety, or caused a sense of shame to pass through our minds. It is a blessing to be humbly grateful for.

CHAPTER XI.

1890.

GLOOMY PROSPECTS OF THE GOVERNMENT—ALLEGED RESIGNATION OF SMITH—MEETING OF PARLIAMENT—DEBATE ON THE PARNELL COMMISSION—REPORT OF THE COMMISSIONERS—DEBATE THEREUPON IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS—ILLNESS OF SMITH—HE OFFERS TO RESIGN—MR GOSCHEN'S BUDGET—THE LICENSING CLAUSES—AGITATION AGAINST THEM—NARROW ESCAPE OF THE GOVERNMENT—WITHDRAWAL OF THE LICENSING CLAUSES—EXTRACT FROM SIR R. TEMPLE'S JOURNAL—SIR W. HARCOURT AND MR BALFOUR—SMITH GOES TO LA BOURBOULE—FINANCIAL CRISIS IN THE CITY—SMITH'S ACTION THEREON—THE PARNELL DIVORCE CASE—REVELATIONS BY MR PARNELL—RUPTURE OF THE IRISH PARTY—THE AUTUMN SESSION.

THE prospect before Ministers at the opening of 1890 was dark and lowering. The Parnell Commission had not yet reported; but inasmuch as their proceedings had, from the first, worn the appearance of a State trial, in which the Irish members were arraigned at the instance of the Government, the exposure of Pigott's villany, and the enforced abandonment of that part of the charge which depended on the genuineness

of letters alleged to have been written by Parnell, had told with tremendous effect against the Unionist party.

A statement went the round of the papers to the effect that, as a consequence of the collapse of the case of the forged letters, Smith intended to resign his office. To a correspondent who wrote to ask the truth about this story, he replied through his secretary that he would have no peace if he were to contradict all the silly statements about him.

Parliament having met on February 11, Sir William Harcourt, before the debate on the Queen's Speech was begun, raised the question of privilege, of which, he maintained, a breach had been committed against the House by the 'Times' in the matter of the charges against the Irish members, and the diminished majority by which his motion was rejected—58—testified to the loss of prestige incurred by the Government as a consequence of their supposed connection with the case.

The Report of the Parnell Commission was made on February 13, and it may be convenient to recapitulate the nine heads of the judges' finding :—

1. We find that the respondent members of Parliament collectively were not members of a conspiracy having for

its object to establish the absolute independence of Ireland, but we find that some of them, together with Mr Davitt, established and joined in the Land League organisation, with the intent, by its means, to bring about the absolute independence of Ireland as a separate nation.

2. We find that the respondents did enter into a conspiracy, by a system of coercion and intimidation, to promote an agrarian agitation against the payment of agricultural rents, for the purpose of impoverishing and expelling from the country the Irish landlords, who were styled "the English garrison."

3. We find that the charge that "when on certain occasions they thought it politic to denounce certain crimes in public, they afterwards led their supporters to believe such denunciations were not sincere," is not established. We entirely acquit Mr Parnell and the other respondents of the charge of insincerity in their denunciation of the Phoenix Park murders, and find that the facsimile letter on which this charge was chiefly based, as against Mr Parnell, is a forgery.

4. We find that the respondents did disseminate the 'Irish World' and other newspapers tending to incite to sedition and the commission of other crime.

5. We find that the respondents did not directly incite persons to the commission of crime other than intimidation, but that they did incite to intimidation, and that the consequence of that incitement was that crime and outrage were committed by the persons incited. We find that it has not been proved that the respondents made payments for the purpose of inciting persons to commit crime.

6. We find as to the allegation that the respondents did nothing to prevent crime, and expressed no *bonâ-fide* disapproval, that some of the respondents, and in par-

ticular Mr Davitt, did express *bond-fide* disapproval of crime and outrage; but that the respondents did not denounce the system of intimidation which led to crime and outrage, but persisted in it, with knowledge of its effect.

7. We find that the respondents did defend persons charged with agrarian crime, and supported their families; but that it has not been proved that they subscribed to testimonials for, or were intimately associated with, notorious criminals, or that they made payments to procure the escape of criminals from justice.

8. We find, as to the allegation that the respondents made payments to compensate persons who had been injured in the commission of crime, that they did make such payments.

9. As to the allegation that the respondents invited the assistance and co-operation of and accepted subscriptions of money from known advocates of crime and the use of dynamite, we find that the respondents did invite the assistance and co-operation of and accepted subscriptions of money from Patrick Ford, a known advocate of crime and the use of dynamite, but that it has not been proved that the respondents, or any of them, knew that the Clann-na-Gael controlled the League, or was collecting money for the parliamentary fund. It has been proved that the respondents invited and obtained the assistance of the Physical Force party in America, including the Clann-na-Gael, and in order to obtain that assistance abstained from repudiating or condemning the action of that party.

This judgment, though exonerating the Irish members from some of the charges made against them in the 'Times,' certainly brought home to

them others involving heinous complicity with guilt; yet it was hailed by the Irish press and by Gladstonian speakers in Great Britain as rapturously as if it had been a complete acquittal. It speaks well for the lofty reputation of the English Bench that amid the storm of angry controversy and recrimination which broke out immediately on the delivery of judgment, not a word was heard impugning the integrity of the Commission. Even the 'Daily News,' leading organ of the Opposition, frankly admitted that one result of the inquiry had been "to vindicate the absolute impartiality of the Special Commissioners."

On March 4, Smith, in conformity with a notice he had given on the publication of the Report of the Commission, rose to move that "this House adopts the Report, and thanks the Commissioners for their just and impartial conduct in the matters referred to them, and orders that the said Report be entered on the journals of this House."

In support of this resolution he spoke at much greater length than it was his custom to do, and in a tone of gravity and studied moderation. Referring to an amendment of which Mr Gladstone had given notice, he said:—

Sir, I think few will deny that these are grave charges, and cannot permit a "clean bill" to be given to the

respondents. The amendment of the right hon. gentleman would practically be a condonation of crime. . . . I have no doubt I shall be asked why the Government intend to proceed no further than the resolution I move to enter the judges' report on the journals of the House. My answer is, because it was no part of our intention at any time to constitute a Commission for the purpose of obtaining evidence to inflict punishment. The primary object was to obtain the truth whether the charges were true or false, and the bill specially provided that all who gave witness of the truth would receive indemnity for so doing. . . . I ask the House to adopt the report without colour, without adding a word by way of preface. I ask the House, in the second place, to give its thanks to the judges, who have so ably and laboriously discharged their duties.

The conclusion of Smith's speech was a forcible piece of invective :—

Are all the experiences of past generations to be set at naught? Is the mandate of an illegal association alone to determine whether legal obligations shall or shall not be discharged, which have not only been the result of contract, but have received the approval of the State itself?

Sir, this prospect, afforded by the alliance of a great party with doctrines which can only be regarded as anarchical, is one which must make a man pause and hesitate. If political necessities compel them to imperil the very existence of society, it may become a question whether even the maintenance of party government in this country, which has in the past done so much to advance and develop our parliamentary institutions, may

not be regarded in these latter days as a curse rather than a blessing. If, only a few years ago, I or any of my hon. friends had ventured to prophesy that the Liberal party would be found ranging itself on the side of those whose language they denounced—whose acts they alleged to be, and believed to be, criminal—no words of condemnation would have been too strong in the mouths of our political opponents in denouncing us for such anticipation. Alas! it has come to pass; and I can only hope and believe that the people of this country, and even the people of Ireland, will come to realise how dangerous to the best interests of the State are the temptations to which the right hon. gentleman and his friends have succumbed. . . . I hope the House will not be carried away by party passions. I entreat the House to consider the grave interests which are at stake, to vindicate the reputation of this House as supporting peace, prosperity, and good order in all parts of her Majesty's dominions, and to maintain those principles without which all our prosperity will certainly pass away.

On March 11 the debate, which had oscillated between passages of great warmth and periods of depressing languor, was fanned into conflagration by a speech from Lord Randolph Churchill, who bitterly inveighed against his former colleagues, and reproached them with what he held to be the abortive and ominous result of the Special Commission. He declared that the action of the Government had been "without precedent, and of evil omen to the rights of minorities and political opponents for the future." He reminded

Ministers that when he had led the House of Commons their majority was 100, and had now fallen to about 70. All this, of course, won him loud plaudits from the Opposition. It was perfectly consistent with the opinion he had expressed all along, from the first moment the Commission had been proposed, and no one could question his right to state his view of the case, however unfavourable might be the effect on the prospects of his own party. But the immediate result of his speech had not been foreseen. Lord Randolph had no more faithful follower, through evil report and good report, in sunshine and in shower, than the late Mr Louis Jennings, then member for Stockport. He was one of a small knot of friends who, as was said, had followed the noble lord into the desert, and held an independent attitude in supporting the Government. This gentleman now rose to express the embarrassment in which he was placed by Lord Randolph's speech. "It is said that I derive my opinions from my noble friend; but occasionally and at intervals I am capable of forming opinions of my own, and such an interval has occurred now." He went on to dissociate himself from any attempt to "stab his party in the back," and declared his loyalty to the Government in this most difficult question.

The majority of the Government in the division which followed was 62. Their position, both in Parliament and in the country, as by-elections continued to show, bore testimony to the damaging effect of the Special Commission upon their reputation.

Anxiety now began to tell its tale upon Smith's health. It was he who, as leader of the House, had to bear the brunt of defending the course taken by Government in appointing the Commission, and he felt acutely the imputations made as to the motives of that policy. He was suffering at the time from persistent attacks of eczema, and began to despair of being able to continue at his post. He spent the Whitsuntide holidays cruising along the south coast in his yacht, and on May 31 addressed the following letter to his chief:—

MY DEAR SALISBURY,—I am afraid I may not be fit for my work when I get home. The Doctor here does not give me much hope, but I have asked Sir William Jenner to see me on my way through Southampton on Monday, if he is in those parts. If I am not fit, I should not like to stay on while another man has all the labour and the responsibility. It would not be fair to him, to you, or to my other colleagues.

It may be only a matter of a few days, but taking one week with another, I have gone back steadily so far as the eczema is concerned, and the recent attacks have been

so severe that they have deprived me of the power to do any work ; but I shall see you on Tuesday at the Cabinet under any circumstances.—Yours very truly,

W. H. SMITH.

But he could not be spared yet, and had to struggle on. In vain his colleagues begged him to let them lighten his labours—to leave the House betimes in the evenings, and suffer a deputy to conduct the business. He would not consent—so long as he remained leader *de jure*—to be anything less than leader *de facto*. The torment of eczema, outward sign of deeper seated evil, increased as the summer went on, depriving him of sleep at night and allowing him no repose by day.

On June 8 Smith wrote to Miss Giberne :—

I am not very bad, but the irritation, like some other mental irritation to which I am subjected in my work, is a little trying, but it will all come right ; and when I look around me at the multitude of gifts and blessings which I enjoy, I at least have no right to complain.

My only difficulty is always to know what is best to be done. Emily would wish me to give up public work more than I feel I can do at present, and my doctors are exacting, and my difficulties in my work are great ; but all these things trouble me less than they did, as I have complete trust that a higher Power will give light and guidance from day to day. . . . God bless you, my dear old friend.

He wrote again to this lady on June 29 in much the same strain. His constant reliance on, and entreaty for, the prayers of others may seem almost monotonous in its repetition; but it was of the man's very nature:—

Private.

GREENLANDS, HENLEY ON THAMES,
29th June 1890.

MY VERY DEAR FRIEND,—Emily wrote to thank you for your very kind note, and I only add one line to say I value very highly your remembrance of me.

I am loaded with blessings—more than I could ever have dreamt of; but I have great responsibilities and heavy duties, which I can only discharge by God's help. Pray daily for me that I may have the true Wisdom to guide me. I think I have been led and guided in the past. I say it reverently; but I am in great need now of guidance, and I believe He will lead me in the way I should go. But let us *all* ask, and believe that we have the petition—the answer—we desire.—Yours very affectionately,
W. H. SMITH.

Meanwhile the difficulties of the Government showed no diminution. The proposal of the Chancellor of the Exchequer to devote part of his surplus to enabling “local authorities to buy up some of that enormous multitude of licences which has so largely contributed to the drink bill of the nation,” aroused the opposition of the Total Abolition party in the country, who detected in it the detested principle of compensa-

tion to publicans. Formidable agitation was got up against the licensing clauses, and the Government, like many of their predecessors, had cause to lament the day when they attempted to deal with this thorny subject.

The second reading of the Local Taxation Bill was taken on May 12. It was opposed by some of the Ministerialists, of whom Mr Caine, one of the Opposition tellers in the division against Mr Gladstone's Home Rule Bill in 1886, moved an amendment refusing assent to any proposal to extinguish licences by means of public moneys. This amendment was supported by Mr Gladstone, who escaped from pledges he had given to his Mid-Lothian constituents in favour of compensation for the abolition of licences, by declaring that since those pledges had been given the law had been "cleared and settled in a manner highly unfavourable, not only to the doctrine of vested interests, but likewise to the doctrine of permanent interest on the part of a publican in an annual licence."

On a division the amendment was negatived by a majority of 73; but the troubles of the Government were not yet at an end. The discussion occupied five more days before the Whitsuntide adjournment, and was resumed after the holidays on June 16, when evidence was given of

the pressure which had been brought to bear on members in the interval. The majorities in favour of the clause sank to below 40, and at length, on June 19, the Government came perilously near defeat. It was "Ascot Thursday," always a day of anguish to Conservative Whips, for the attractions of the race for the Cup generally prove stronger to many members than the calls of duty. The Opposition were alive to their opportunity, and attempted a dexterous piece of strategy which came very nearly being successful. Mr Storey, who had just begun his speech when the debate stood adjourned on the previous Tuesday, was expected, in the natural order of things, to resume it, and so the debate should be carried on until the afternoon trains should bring back the pleasure-seekers. But, to the dismay of Ministerialists, he kept silence: no one else rose; the Government were taken by surprise, and found themselves face to face with a snatch division. Defeat seemed inevitable, and was only averted by the timely arrival of half-a-dozen Ministerialists from Ascot. But practically the majority of 4, which saved the Government, sounded the knell of the licensing clauses, which being withdrawn on June 26, left an unsightly scar on the reputation of the Cabinet.

Smith had to bear a full share—perhaps more than was due—of the disfavour brought upon the Government by what many of their own supporters considered a serious blunder. Sir Richard Temple, at that time Conservative member for Worcestershire, and now for the Richmond Division of Surrey, was then, as he still remains, one of the most constant and observant attendants upon the business of the House. It has been the practice of that gentleman to keep a minute diary of events, containing candid comments upon the actions and character of public men. Sir Richard has permitted the following extract to be made from his journal, a source which guarantees it as a trustworthy description of the general feeling towards Smith among men of his own party during the summer of 1890 :—

The following session, 1890, he was less successful. Having overloaded their legislative programme, despite the experience of 1888, the Ministry piled up the agony by proposing a Licensing Bill which stirred up the most obstructive animosity, and spoilt the principal part of the session, though the Ministry managed to retrieve the disaster by lesser measures. This Licensing Bill, too, was sprung upon us without notice, and without mention in the Queen's Speech. The party were justly angered at all this, which they regarded as nothing short of blundering, and which they would have stopped had they got even an

inkling beforehand. Now this Licensing Bill mistake was attributed, not to W. H. Smith by his followers, but to one or more of his ambitious colleagues in the Cabinet. But our men asked each other, What is the use of him as leader if he cannot check these vagaries? The Prime Minister could hardly do so, as he sits in the Lords. The proper—indeed the only—person to do so on this occasion was W. H. Smith, the leader in the Commons. What, then, was he about? why did he not authoritatively interpose? These are questions which have never yet been solved. This reason and the supposed state of his health again brought up the discussion about the future leadership to the surface of men's minds. But then there would be difficulty in choosing a successor to him. His many merits and virtues remained in countless details, despite this one cardinal failure, and we rather shuddered at the thought that after all he might be forced to retire by failure of strength. . . . I should add that he is supposed to be a conciliatory moderator in all internal troubles in the Ministry, and that his forte is the judicious and often witty parrying of awkward questions.¹

¹ Sir Richard Temple's Journal will afford interesting reading to the public if it ever sees the light of day. I may permit myself to make the following further extract from it in reference to Mr W. H. Smith :—

“When I first saw him in 1886, he seemed to be a very respectable statesman of average parliamentary power, and nothing more. His success in practical life, his business-like experience, and his large resources, stood him in good stead. He was understood to be a moderate, well-meaning, and trustworthy man all round. As the Minister of any State department he would be efficient in Parliament, but he had no particular gift for addressing the House, though a good platform speaker outside. Further eminence than this was not at all anticipated for him politically, but socially he would

The opportunity was too good to be lost by such a doughty party champion as Sir William Harcourt. In the House and out of it he was relentless in his attacks upon the Government, and one of these led him into a pretty encounter with Mr Arthur Balfour, in which the style of the two men appeared in picturesque contrast. Sir William Harcourt had written a letter to the 'Times' complaining of the state of public business, and, with redundancy of metaphor,—a delicate instrument which it is well not to intrust to heavy hands,—had likened the House of Commons successively to a horse, a ship, a woman,

always be a useful factor in the party because of his ever-growing wealth, his personal popularity, affability, and hospitality, and his unassuming business-like capacity.

"... I well recollect his appearing on the first place on the Treasury Bench at the beginning of the long and eventful session of 1887. He produced a favourable impression by the way in which he took charge, with modesty and good taste altogether. He was prompt, smart, and firm in pressing on the business of the House and in resisting obstruction, yet he was always polite. . . .

"Apart from the unyielding doctrines he had to enforce, he won the respect and even goodwill of the Opposition. All through that tremendous session of 1887 he adhered to his principles quite unfalteringly: making countless little speeches with unfaltering good temper, though seldom making a good speech; but whenever he had occasion, or rather obligation, to do so, using notes or manuscript largely. When at length well advanced into autumn, the session ended with a noble record of legislative and administrative achievements. I deemed him the most fortunate politician I had yet known, considering the moderate claims he originally had to the highest promotion, the magnitude of the office he had held, and the success with which he had borne himself therein."

and a fish, and Mr W. H. Smith, its leader, to a clumsy jockey, a lubberly steersman, an ungainly lover, and a raw angler. Next day Mr Balfour took the opportunity afforded him by a banquet of the Grocers' Company to retaliate upon Sir William.

Do you not wish [he asked] to see Sir William Harcourt exercising the qualities in which he says we are so deficient? Do you not wish to see him in the character of a jockey riding a horse? do you not wish to see him in the character of a helmsman steering a ship, or in the character of a sportsman landing a fish? But, above all, do you not wish to see him in the character of a lover paying court to the House of Commons as the lady of his affections? Since the days of Polyphemus and Galatea I would say that such a lover had not been seen on this sublunary stage. But what a spectacle would be there! The brutal and tyrannical management of the House of Commons by its present leader would be put an end to; the rough methods which Mr Smith adopts would no longer be heard of. We should have the tactful, the suave—what epithet can I use?—management of Sir William Harcourt: a method of dealing with the situation perfectly regardful of other people's feelings; the method of management that conciliates opponents and encourages friends. All that will be seen when the present leader of the House is ousted, and Sir William Harcourt, that delicate and refined manager of men, comes to the head of affairs.

It is interesting to read Smith's vindication of the policy of the Government on the liquor laws.

On June 14 he wrote to a correspondent who had taken him severely to task :—

Nothing is more painful to me than to be obliged to persevere in a course which men like you view with apprehension. The Government have introduced the provisions into the Local Taxation Bill which are objected to in order to diminish the temptations to intemperance, and they believe they will have that effect.

Ought we with this conviction to yield to the opposition of Mr Caine and his friends, which proceeds from what I can only describe as an hallucination of which our irreconcilable opponents are only too glad to avail themselves ?

If nothing is gained to the cause of Temperance by decreasing the number of public-houses, then I admit I have made a mistake ; but I have always believed myself that to shut up one was to remove one source of temptation.—Yours very truly,

W. H. SMITH.

Smith's health was again giving discomfort to himself and anxiety to his friends. On July 10 he wrote to his doctor :—

You let drop the words yesterday, “ Is the game worth the candle ? ” suggesting to me, as I thought at the moment, to consider whether I ought to go on with my present work in the Government ; and you then went on to say that I had a very small reserve of power (or balance at my banker's, so to speak), which might be very easily overdrawn.

My position is that I am what I am in the House of Commons from no personal ambition. I fill a place in

the machine of Government at the desire of my colleagues, and I am perfectly willing to drop out of it whenever in their judgment it is no longer necessary that I should remain; but a sense of loyalty to them and to the country keeps me with them so long as they want me to stay, and I am at all able to do the work.

Now it is for you to say if I am able. It would be folly and worse than folly if I cut short my life by staying on a few weeks or a few months longer as leader of the House; but if I have only to bear personal discomfort and wearisomeness, I should not be justified in withdrawing, at the cost of serious difficulty to the Government, at the present time.

The reply he received to this letter left Smith in no doubt as to the imminence of the risk incurred by perseverance, though it gave him hopes that, if timely precautions were taken, the trouble might yet be overcome, and he might be spared to many years of usefulness.¹ He was recommended to go to La Bourboule, near Royat, where Lord and Lady Salisbury already had

¹ No one understood better than Smith the irreparable effects of overwork on a man's constitution. A few months before his last illness he happened to meet Mr Reginald Lucas, just returned from abroad, where he had been sent to recruit his health, which had suffered from his duties as private secretary to one of Smith's colleagues. After inquiring about the effect of his foreign trip, he warned Mr Lucas against working too hard in the future. Mr Lucas made the natural remark that Mr Smith's own practice was at strange variance with his precept.

"I am an old man now," replied Smith, "and can't last long in any case. You are a young man, and must take care of yourself: whatever you do, avoid overwork, and take plenty of holidays."

gone; and this advice he followed, though, unhappily, not till more than a month had elapsed. He reached La Bourboule on August 14 with Mrs Smith and his daughter Helen, and remained till September 9. The waters did him a great deal of good, and he was able to join the Pandora at Venice, whence the party cruised down the Adriatic and up the coast of Italy, landing at Toulon on October 13. But Smith got a chill there; by the time he reached Paris he was very poorly, and a month after arriving in England he was plunged into a sea of anxiety on behalf of other people by the affairs of Barings' Bank, and the consequent imminence of widespread disaster in the City. The Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr Goschen, held a consultation at the Bank of England on November 10, and firmly declared that the only condition on which Government support could be permitted was that the Bank should satisfy themselves that Barings would prove solvent, were time allowed for realisation of assets. This was a momentous step to take on the part of the Treasury, and, having made his decision, Mr Goschen left London to fulfil some political engagements in the North. The Bank having reported satisfactorily on the question submitted to them, it fell to Smith, as First Lord, in the absence of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, to

carry out the negotiations necessary to avert the threatened calamity. The following letter from Mr Lidderdale, at that time Governor of the Bank of England, was written after Mr Smith's death to Mr J. L. Pattisson, his private secretary:—

8th October 1891.

I have not the honour of being acquainted with Mr Smith's family, & therefore I cannot express to them direct my deep personal regret at a loss the seriousness of which will, I feel sure, be felt hereafter more than it is even now when regrets are general. Until the day I came to Downing St. about the Baring crisis I had not met your chief, but my intercourse with him on that occasion & afterwards led to a feeling on my part towards him of high respect & personal regard, such as I have never experienced before on so limited an acquaintance, & such as I have *very* rarely entertained for a public man. Mr Smith impressed me with a strong sense of his soundness of judgment & steadfastness, & gave me, in addition, a marked illustration of his public spirit & generosity. When I was led by some remark of his to say, "I fear, sir, you do not appreciate the gravity of the position," he replied, "You are mistaken; & to prove this I will myself send you a cheque for £100,000 to-morrow morning, if you tell me to do so."

This £100,000 was to be Mr Smith's contribution towards averting the danger with which our finance was threatened, & it was offered some hours before the Guarantee Fund was started.

A letter written by Smith to Mr Lidderdale, on November 21, 1890, shows on what condi-

tions and in what expectation this offer was made :—

My motive in offering a guarantee of £100,000 was entirely a public one. I thought it would have been a national misfortune if Barings had gone down, and I was willing to incur a private risk to avert that disaster; but since I have been a member of the Government—since 1874—I have never asked for an allotment of shares in a company, or taken part in speculation, in order that as a Minister or ex-Minister it may be impossible for any one to impute interested motives to me in any transaction I may have with people out of doors on behalf of the Government.

Following this rule, I should not ask for any share in the New Barings, but I do regard it as of great public importance that the business of the House should be kept together and carried on on the old lines* (not the recent ones), and if it was necessary to that end that I should subscribe, I am prepared to do so; but for the reasons I have given, I had rather not—as a matter of course and of policy.

Before starting for the Continent, Smith had held many long and anxious conferences with the authorities of the House and those members best acquainted with its practice on a further contemplated change in its procedure. It must have occurred to any one who has followed the proceedings in Parliament how great is the waste of time involved in the abandonment of bills which it has not been possible, within the limits of a session, to carry through all their stages. Such bills,

however desirable in themselves, however great and decided the majority of the House may be in their favour, and however thoroughly they may have been discussed, are lost unless, when the day of prorogation arrives, they have been read a first and second time, passed through Committee, been reported, and then read a third time, and all this in both Houses. If a bill fails to survive this multiple ordeal, and it is resolved to persevere with it, the whole process has to be gone over again in the ensuing session, often with the same result.

As a business man, Smith saw the absurdity of this system, and resolved, if possible, to bring it more into harmony with what is rational and practical. Accordingly he prepared and submitted a draft rule, under which it should be possible to suspend proceedings on any bill under consideration in Committee and resume it at the same stage in the ensuing session. This proposal was referred to a Select Committee, which, after several sittings, agreed that "any claim or attempt by either House of Parliament by its own authority, by standing order or otherwise, to postpone to a future session of Parliament any bill sent to it from the other House of Parliament, would be a breach of the constitutional usage of Parliament." Further proceedings of the Committee were, however, stayed by an an-

nouncement made by Smith on July 10 that, owing to the pressure of business, the Government did not intend to proceed with the proposed new Standing Order. Opinion was divided as to the advantage of Mr Smith's proposal. It would, if carried into effect, have greatly lessened the power of the minority in opposing legislation to which they objected; while, on the other hand, the futility and exasperating waste of energy and time incident to the present system would have been greatly lessened by the contemplated change.

Parliament was prorogued on August 12, on the understanding that it was to be summoned together again before Christmas, in order to take up the Irish Land Bill and the Tithes Bill, which it had been found necessary to abandon. Opposition speakers during the recess indulged their audiences with animated forecasts of the fate which lay in wait for a discredited Government in the autumn session, and Ministerialists themselves looked forward with little equanimity to what promised to be a time of difficulty and possible disaster. But all this was changed before the day of meeting. The divorce suit brought by Captain O'Shea, formerly a Parnellite member of Parliament, against his wife, and Mr Parnell as co-respondent, had been prejudged by Gladstonians and Parnellites as another vile con-

spiracy, similar to that of the forged letters, to destroy Parnell's character and wreck the cause of Home Rule ; and this impression was strengthened, as it had been in the trial before the Special Commission, by the retention of the Unionist Solicitor-General, Sir Edward Clarke, as counsel for Captain O'Shea. But to the dismay and perplexity of all his friends and political allies, no appearance was made on the part of Mr Parnell, who allowed judgment to be given against him without offering any defence.

This took place just a week before the meeting of Parliament on November 25. Its effect upon the standing of Parnell as a politician, and on the fortunes of the party which he led, was such as could have ensued on similar circumstances in no other country under the sun. Nowhere except in England is the public standing and influence of a statesman subject to irretrievable damage on account of his private irregularities. For sixteen years Parnell had maintained undisputed supremacy in the councils of the Irish party ; he had led them in Parliament as they had never been led before ; his ascendancy had quelled all minor rivalries — austere, sagacious, and resolute, he had brought Home Rule, once a wild impracticable dream, to the brink of accomplishment. The Irish members were themselves the first to prove

their conviction that Parnell could not be spared : they held an enthusiastic meeting in Dublin on November 20, and vowed unabated confidence in their great leader.

But the English Nonconformists and Scottish Presbyterians had to be taken into account. Without their support Mr Gladstone would be helpless, and Home Rule would sink hopelessly out of sight. They made known their irrevocable determination not to work for Home Rule so long as Parnell remained at the head of the Irish party, and this was followed by an open letter from Mr Gladstone to Mr John Morley, in which he said :—

I thought it necessary, viewing the arrangements for the commencement of the session to-morrow, to acquaint Mr Mc'Carthy with the conclusion at which, after using all the means of observation and reflection in my power, I had arrived. It was, that notwithstanding the splendid services rendered by Mr Parnell to his country, his continuance at the present moment in the leadership would be productive of consequences disastrous in the highest degree to the cause of Ireland.

It is not necessary to refer in this place to the stormy scenes which disturbed the consultations of the Nationalist members in Committee Room 15, further than as they ended in the violent rupture of the Irish party into two factions. The majority of them, forty-five in number, not-

withstanding their recent renewal of fealty to Parnell in the Leinster Hall, appeared overawed by Mr Gladstone's disownment of Parnell as the future Irish leader, and, renouncing the authority of the latter, elected Mr Justin M'Carthy "Sessional Chairman" in his place; but twenty-six members remained firm in allegiance to their old and trusted chief. For all practical purpose, the Irish Opposition was wrecked for the time being.

But this was not all. Parnell was not the sort of man to lie down under punishment from Mr Gladstone. He had something in store for the leader of the Liberals, and he was not long in revealing his method of vengeance. He issued a manifesto to the Irish people, in which he declared that Mr Gladstone's interference for the purpose of influencing the Irish people in their choice of a leader, and the threat in his letter, "repeated so insolently on many English platforms and in numerous British newspapers," compelled him "to put before you information which until now, so far as my colleagues are concerned, has been solely in my possession, and which will enable you to understand the measure of the loss with which you are threatened, unless you consent to throw me to the English wolves now howling for my destruction."

Parnell then went on to describe certain trans-

actions that took place during his visit to Mr Gladstone at Hawarden in November 1889. He said that there he had laid before him, in a conversation lasting two hours, "mainly monopolised by Mr Gladstone," a detailed scheme of Home Rule, to be put in effect as soon as the Liberal party returned to office; but that, pending the general election, absolute silence was to be preserved on the question of retaining the Irish members—all or any of them—at Westminster. Further, Mr Parnell described how Mr Morley expressed perplexity at the "avowed absence of any policy on the part of the Liberal leaders and party with regard to the land question," and how he (Parnell) was persuaded at length, though he thought it false strategy, to meet Mr Balfour's Land Bill with a direct negative.

Finally, he gave the details of an interview he had had with Mr Morley a few weeks previously, in which, he said, he had persuaded that gentleman to adopt the "oblique method of procedure" in opposing the Land Bill.

But, in addition, he made me a remarkable proposal, referring to the probable approaching victory of the Liberal party at the polls. He suggested some considerations as to the future of the Irish party. He asked me whether I would be willing to assume the office of Chief Secretary to the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, or to allow another mem-

ber of my party to take the position. He also put before me the desirability of filling one of the law offices of the Crown in Ireland by a legal member of my party.

There was enough in this startling document to withdraw the attention of the Liberal party from the proceedings of the Government, and to put them on their defence before the people whom they aspired to rule. Its publication was immediately followed by a letter from Mr Gladstone, denying the accuracy of Mr Parnell's version of the Hawarden negotiations.

No single suggestion [ran one sentence] was offered by me to Mr Parnell as formal, or as unanimous, or as final. It was a statement perfectly free, and without prejudice, of points in which either I myself, or such of my colleagues as I had been able to consult, inclined generally to believe that the plan of 1886 for Home Rule in Ireland might be improved, and as to which I was desirous to learn whether they raised any serious objection in the mind of Mr Parnell.

Mr Morley also published a denial :—

Mr Parnell imputes to me that in our conversation of November 10 (five days before the proceedings in the divorce court) I made a "remarkable proposal," with the object of absorbing the Irish party into English politics by means of office. I made no proposal. It was natural that in a free and confidential discussion of a possible future I should wish to make sure, for Mr Gladstone's information, that Mr Parnell still held to the self-denying declarations of 1880.

While this tempest was raging, business in the House of Commons had begun with unusual tranquillity. Smith wrote to Mr Gladstone on November 25, informing him that it was his intention, as soon as the Address had been voted, to ask the House to give the Government the whole of its time up to Christmas for the consideration of the Tithes and Land Purchase Bills. In reply Mr Gladstone observed, "You will not require to be told that I view it with regret." It was expected that Mr Smith's proposal would be hotly contested, but there was no spirit left, for the time being, in the Opposition, and it was carried without difficulty. The Tithes Bill and the Land Bill were read a second time, the latter giving the first opportunity of accentuating the split in the Irish party,—for while the anti-Parnellites went with Mr Gladstone into the lobby against it, Parnell and his faithful followers voted with the Government.¹ Both bills

¹ Writing to Sir Henry Acland, Smith observed of the Land Bill introduced in the previous spring that it was "not a perfect or a complete measure. Balfour does not contend that it is, and the time has not arrived at which it would be possible to deal with the difficulty once and for all. Very many of the landlords believe that they can hold on and get their rents. They do not seem to have any fear of a possible Radical majority in the House of Commons, a possible Home Rule Government, who, to enable them to recover their money or their land, must be prepared to give the assistance of the Police to enforce the process of law. I have doubt whether Parnell, as Chief Secretary for Ireland before Home Rule

were afterwards allowed to pass into the Committee stage, to be resumed after the Christmas holidays, and Parliament was adjourned on December 9 until January 22—the autumn session, which had been approached with so much trepidation by Ministers and eager anticipation of victory by the Opposition, having lasted less than a fortnight. The Government was saved from the consequences of unskilful administration, as a Scotsman might say, “mair by luck than gude guidin’.”

is granted, would or could order Constabulary to enforce a decree of eviction, or even a distraint; and, if I am right, some measure of Land Purchase on a large scale is necessary for the saving of the landlord and to prevent utter demoralisation of the peasant occupier.

“You should read the story of the Ponsonby estate in the ‘Times’ of yesterday [April 12, 1890]. It reads like a true statement, and if it is true, I cannot understand how any honest man can excuse or justify the Plan of Campaign on that property.

“I agree with Mr Trench—tenants will not in the long-run pay higher rents to landlords than their neighbours are paying by way of annuity to the State. The time will come when the landlords themselves will feel that further and more drastic powers of purchase will be required; but they won’t have them yet.”

CHAPTER XII.

1891.

LETTER TO THE DUKE OF RUTLAND—STATE OF PARTIES IN PARLIAMENT—THE RELIGIOUS DISABILITIES REMOVAL BILL—REJECTION THEREOF MOVED BY SMITH—THE LAST OF THE BRADLAUGH DIFFICULTY—VOTE OF CENSURE ON IRISH ADMINISTRATION—SMITH'S OPINION ON SUNDAY OPENING OF MUSEUMS—HIS LAST LETTER TO THE DUKE OF RUTLAND—IS APPOINTED LORD WARDEN OF THE CINQUE PORTS—SPENDS WHITSUNTIDE AT CADENABIA—INCREASING ILLNESS—HIS LAST WORDS IN PARLIAMENT—APPEARS FOR THE LAST TIME IN PUBLIC AT HATFIELD—GOES WITH HIS FAMILY TO WALMER CASTLE.

ALWAYS a frequent and profuse letter-writer, Smith maintained a constant correspondence throughout the ill health which constantly oppressed him during 1891. Here is a letter to the Duke of Rutland, who was prevented by gout from attending the January Cabinets :—

3 GROSVENOR PLACE, S.W.,
19th Jan. 1891.

MY DEAR DUKE,—It was very good of you to write to me at such length. I waited to reply until we had had

our first Cabinet after Salisbury's return, and although you may possibly hear from others of our colleagues, I will tell you shortly what we did—if Cabinets ever do anything. We considered somewhat alarmist telegrams from the Cape. The Boers are supposed to be about to *trek* into Mashonaland and set up a republic, with the connivance of the Transvaal Government. . . . We agreed a telegram should go warning the Transvaal Government that the threatened incursion would be unfriendly, hostile, and a breach of the Swazi Convention. . . . The Budget was of course considered, and your views as to the Income-tax were debated, but it was felt that, having included Assisted Education in the Queen's Speech, provision must be made for it, and a reduction of Income-tax postponed. Both cannot be done this year. It is, I think, certain that if we proposed to postpone the former to the latter, we should be met by an amendment which would unite all the men on the Liberal benches with some of our own men against us. Every member now has his eye on the General Election, and every vote is given from an Opportunist point of view. The payers of school fees are more powerful from a voting point of view than the payers of Income-tax!

The vote on Opium shows the demoralisation of the House. Men could not be induced to vote against Pease. They were terrorised by the cry of immorality raised by the Sentimental and Dissenting Agitators. . . .

On resuming work in Parliament on January 22, Ministers found themselves confronted by a disorganised and perplexed Opposition. The question of the Irish leadership was still under discussion at Boulogne, between Mr Parnell on

the one hand, and, on the other, Mr Dillon and Mr O'Brien, the latter having been summoned from America to act as peacemaker between the two sections. In these negotiations Parnell held a position of great power, inasmuch as a large proportion of the funds of the National League were locked up in his name, and could only be released on his order.

Meanwhile the conflict between Parnellites and anti-Parnellites had assumed the character of one between the ecclesiastical and the purely revolutionary forces in Ireland. It was not until the majority of the Irish parliamentary party had declared against Parnell, that the authorities of the Roman Catholic Church pronounced against the recognition of his leadership, or, as Lord Salisbury expressed it in the House of Lords, "gently descended on the right side of the fence."

In some respects this Boulogne conference offered a parallel to the Round-Table Conference of 1887: similar hopes were entertained of reconciliation between the ruptured sections of a once united party: the chances seemed in each case to be favourable to reunion: in each case the negotiations broke down, and left the breach wider and more accentuated than before.

On February 4 Mr Gladstone moved the second reading of a bill which he had introduced to re-

move the disability which prevents Roman Catholics holding the appointments of Lord Chancellor and Viceroy of Ireland, but severing from the first-named office the right of administering the ecclesiastical patronage of the Crown. It appeared to some persons that the right hon. gentleman's motive in moving in this matter at that particular time was mainly a personal one—namely, to enable him, in the event of a return of his party to office, to appoint two of his most prominent supporters, who happened to be Roman Catholics, one to the woolsack, the other to the Lord Lieutenancy. Be that as it might, it was open to Smith, upon whom devolved the duty of moving the rejection of the bill, to argue that although Mr Gladstone was now so much impressed with the importance of the question, and so convinced of the existence of a grievance, that he had been impelled to take the course, most unusual in an ex-Premier, of personally introducing a bill, yet it had never occurred to him to take action in the matter at a time when, being in office and responsible for the policy of the Cabinet, he might have done so to some effect.

I do not wish [said Smith] to enter at any length upon the details of the measure; but I want to point out this one thing—either the measure is necessary, or it is not necessary. If it is not necessary, it is open to the objec-

FACSIMILE OF LETTER REFERRED TO AT PAGE 299.

confidential

2, Whitehall Gardens,

S.W.

Aug: 3

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Dear W Smith,

I agree Me to
yourself, it is my
intention to submit
your name to the
Queen, to fill the

W. H. Smith Esq
c. p.

breast

vacant office of
Genl. S. of ye Admiralty.

If you accept the
post, I doubt not
you will fulfil its
duties with the
same devotion &
ability, which
have

have distinguished
your transaction of
affairs in the all-important
Department to which
you are now attached.

Believe me,

faithfully yours,

Leaconsfield.

tion which the right hon. gentleman himself indicated—that it does impose a new disability. And the point I wish to draw the attention of the House to is, that while it disqualifies the Lord Chancellor from exercising ecclesiastical patronage, and from discharging any trust of any corporation or institution which may attach to the Church of England, it leaves him open to declare the law and policy affecting such trusts, so that the Lord Chancellor is to be rendered incapable of discharging an executive duty within the plain direction of the trust; . . . but he is not debarred from discharging the duties affecting the policy and the legal interpretation of such trusts. I can hardly regard that as either wise or satisfactory. It is, I can only repeat, the setting up of a new scheme of disability, declaring at one moment that a Roman Catholic lawyer is to be fully capable of discharging the duties of Lord Chancellor, and the next moment cutting off from him a very large proportion of the most important duties which devolve upon him.

I am not, I believe, straining a point at all in saying that the right hon. gentleman must have contemplated all these consequences with reference to the future government of Ireland by the light of the book which he has written¹ and the opinions he has expressed therein. I regard this bill as most unfortunate and inopportune. I do not know why it is proposed, unless it be in connection with the scheme of Home Rule with which the right hon. gentleman is identified. We have fellow-subjects of the Roman Catholic faith in all parts of the world. We trust them; we rely upon them to discharge their several duties; and there is no disability of any kind upon them other than those to which reference has been made in

¹ The Vatican Decrees.

this bill. It seems to me that those who stir questions of this kind incur a grave responsibility. The revival of religious controversy is a matter that ought to be avoided by all who have any regard for the peace and wellbeing of the country. We are in peace, and I earnestly hope that the House and country will allow us to remain so, and that this bill may not pass into law.

In effect the bill was rejected by a majority of 47, 27 Conservatives voting in the minority against the Government.

The Catholic Union of Great Britain took umbrage at the action of the Government in resisting Mr Gladstone's measure, and forwarded through their President, the Duke of Norfolk, to Mr Smith a copy of a resolution expressing "deep pain at the recent rejection by the House of Commons of the Religious Disabilities Removal Bill," and protesting "against the slur thereby cast upon the loyalty and patriotism of the Catholics of this country." In reply, Smith wrote the following letter to the Duke:—

10 DOWNING ST., WHITEHALL,
Feb. 26, 1891.

MY DEAR DUKE OF NORFOLK,—Pray accept my apologies for delay in acknowledging your letter of the 19th inst., enclosing the resolution passed at the recent meeting of the Catholic Union of Great Britain; but I have been overwhelmed with work during the last week.

I am very sorry that the meeting should have considered

the action of the House of Commons, in regard to the Religious Disabilities Removal Bill, as in any way a slur upon the loyalty and patriotism of her Majesty's Roman Catholic subjects. Not only did I take pains in my speech to emphasise the fact that no one who knows English society could doubt the perfect loyalty of the Roman Catholics, but I pointed out that the constitution of her Majesty's Government at the present time was in itself a complete answer to such a suggestion.—Believe me, my dear Lord Duke, yours very truly,

W. H. SMITH.

There were, however, some members of the Catholic Union who by no means approved of the action taken by that body on this occasion, as is proved by the following extract from a letter written to Mr Smith by a member of a distinguished Roman Catholic family :—

Feb. 23, '91.

DEAR MR SMITH,—In common with other Catholics who are supporters of Tory principles, I am extremely grieved to hear that a resolution has been sent to you from the Catholic Union, which proves that certain influential gentlemen have fallen into the trap so cleverly laid for them by Mr Gladstone. It is well you should know that there were only about fifty present at the meeting. . . . I know several equally influential men who are as opposed to this resolution as I am; and tho' no doubt the rank & file in Lancashire have been taken in & use will be made of it by Gladstonians, I am quite sure such a resolution would not have been carried as it was if the meeting had been more representative. I never received notice of it.

Early in the session, on January 27, the House of Commons entered for the last time upon the consideration of the law of the Parliamentary Oath as it affected Mr Charles Bradlaugh, the member for Northampton. That member had put upon the paper a notice calling upon the House to expunge from its Journals the resolution of June 22, 1880, whereby he was debarred from taking the oath or making affirmation, such resolution "being subversive of the rights of the whole body of electors of this kingdom." But when the day appointed for the discussion arrived, Mr Bradlaugh was lying on what proved to be his death-bed, and Dr Hunter moved the resolution in his place.

The relations of Mr Bradlaugh with the House, and the feeling towards him among members of all parties, had greatly altered since the exciting scenes attendant upon his first appearance in Parliament, and Smith made handsome allusion to this in declaring the line which the Government intended to pursue in dealing with the motion :—

I must express for myself, and, I am sure, for all my hon. friends on this side of the House, the great regret we feel at the illness of the hon. member for Northampton. He is undoubtedly a warm partisan. He takes a strong view on all points on which he thinks it right to give

expression to views in this House; but he has been undoubtedly a valuable addition to this House, not only from the freedom and independence with which he has expressed his views, but from the manner in which he has conducted himself here. . . . I have considered very carefully the suggestion which has been made by the hon. and learned member for Aberdeen. We remain of the opinion expressed in the resolution of 1880. We believe that the House at that time did its duty. . . . But, sir, the circumstances are entirely changed. There is no longer any necessity for maintaining on the Journals of the House this resolution; and in all the circumstances in which we find ourselves, and bearing in mind that Mr Bradlaugh has been a useful member of this House for six or seven years, I shall not resist the motion, upon the understanding [which had been advocated by Mr Gladstone] that the last words, impugning the authority and control of this House, are struck out. I could not under any circumstances consent to say that the House in 1880 exceeded its duty—that it did anything contrary to the law of Parliament, or anything in derogation of the rights and privileges of the people. But if it is merely the desire that the resolution of 1880 should be erased from the records, I shall offer no opposition.

This was agreed to, and thus the House of Commons performed a gracious act towards one of its members, without in any degree reflecting upon the motives or wisdom of those who had been compelled to deal with very difficult circumstances.

On February 16 Mr John Morley moved a vote

of censure on the Government in regard to the administration of the law in Ireland. To this Mr T. W. Russell moved an amendment, to the effect that the Tipperary prosecutions and other proceedings "had been rendered imperative by the existence and activity of an illegal conspiracy against the rights of the people, who had been cruelly persecuted, and that the House rejoiced in the successful vindication of the law." The omission of the words of Mr Morley's resolution, in order to insert Mr Russell's amendment, was carried by 75 votes, and the debate was resumed. At one o'clock in the morning Smith rose to reply to Sir William Harcourt, who had seconded Mr Healy's motion for the adjournment of the debate. He rallied Sir William on the attempt he had joined in to evade the meaning of the decision at which the House had just arrived, and at half-past one the debate was adjourned, never more to be resumed.

This was the last direct attack upon the Government in which Smith was ever to take part as one of the defending party.

The most important provision in Mr Goschen's Budget was one to redeem the reference in the Queen's Speech to the alleviation of "the burden which compulsory education has in recent years

imposed on the poorer portions of the people.” “I have,” said the Chancellor of the Exchequer, “two millions at my disposal, in one sense; but there sits on the Treasury Bench another despoiler of the public purse—my right hon. friend the Vice-President of the Council.” To make elementary education free in England, Ireland, and Wales, as had already been done in Scotland, would swallow up the whole surplus; but the Government had made up their minds, and the thing was done.

On the vexed question of the Sunday opening of museums, Smith made the following reply to one who had addressed inquiry to him:—

March 20, 1891.

I know there is difference of opinion between men who all earnestly desire to promote the happiness of their fellow-creatures, as to the opening of picture-galleries and museums on Sundays. I do not presume to find fault with those who differ from me, but I remain of opinion that on the whole it would be harmful to the interests of the working classes, as it would involve the compulsory employment by the State of many of these servants on Sundays, and set an example to private employers of labour in the direction of amusements.

I am of opinion that a Sunday rest is invaluable to the working man, and I am anxious to protect it for him as much as I can.—Yours very sincerely,

W. H. SMITH.

Stoutly as Smith had opposed, time after time, the policy of Mr Gladstone on many subjects, and plainly as he sometimes expressed his disapproval at the inconsistency of that statesman's course with the principles which, as Smith held, should lie at the base of all government, it is pleasant to record an instance of the personal regard which endured to the end between these political opponents. On March 28 Smith wrote to the Right Hon. Akers Douglas, M.P., the Patronage Secretary :—

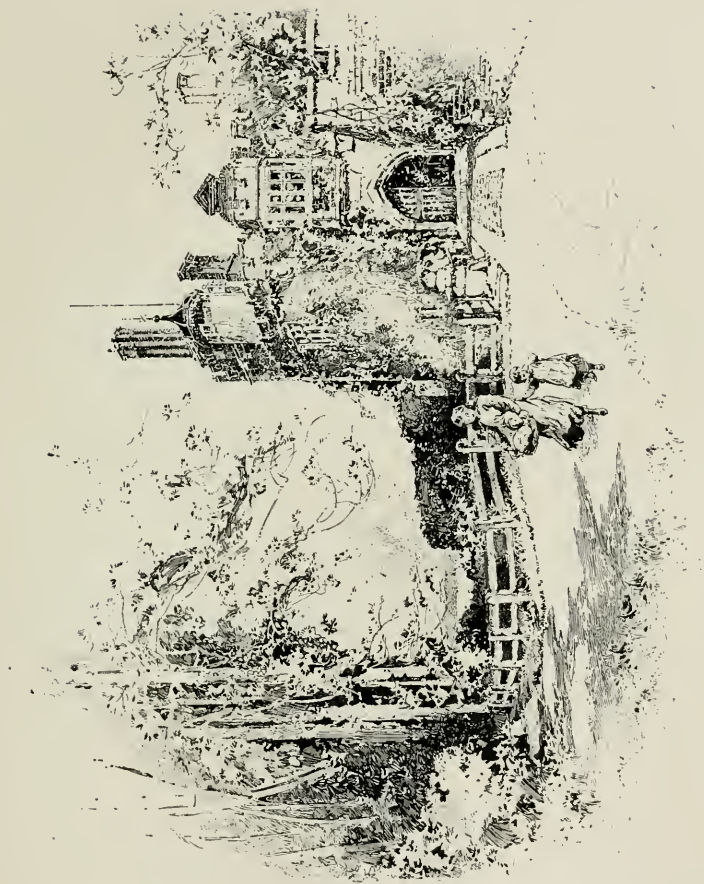
Harcourt asks me to dinner on April 15 to meet Gladstone, and I am very much inclined to go. Would it frighten our friends?

Three months later, on June 28, he observed in a letter to Sir Henry Acland :—

Gladstone is more kindly in his personal relations than I have ever known him, but he is physically much weaker, and the least exertion knocks him over.

Smith had thoughts for gentler subjects than political strife, as is shown by the following letter, written on April 4, to the Duke of Rutland :—

This is the last of my so-called holidays; but every day has brought its three or four hours' work. It is however a most restful change to write my letters in full view of trees and hills, which to-day are refreshed by their first April shower. . . . I have long wanted to ask you to do me a kindness while there is yet time. I have a great desire



WALMER CASTLE.

to put the proper names to Disraeli's characters in his political novels. . . . Would you mind doing it for me? I would put it by as a literary treasure in my library: not to be opened for any number of years that you might stipulate, if you thought it desirable to do so. Baillie-Cochrane is gone, and there is no one I know of who can supply the information but yourself. . . . Cranbrook writes to me to-day to say that he has seen it stated in the papers that Michael Davitt has been placed on the Royal Commission on Labour. I wrote at once to say there was no truth in the story. Justin M'Carthy, who has been at Cannes, wrote and telegraphed asking that he (Davitt) might be put upon it to represent the late Parnell party, but I telegraphed in reply that it was impossible. . . . Lord Granville's death is a real loss, although he had got very old lately. The bench opposite to you in the House of Lords will not be at all the same without him.

One more distinction and mark of his sovereign's favour was to be bestowed on Smith, and one which probably gave him more gratification than any of the honours he had already received. On May 1, 1891, after Lord Granville's death, Lord Salisbury wrote to him to say that he had submitted his name to the Queen for the Wardenship of the Cinque Ports:—

It is a semi-naval position, & you have been since 1878 always exceedingly popular with naval people: & I think the Dover people would feel complimented at the Leader of the House of Commons taking it. I enclose the Queen's answer.

Will you take it?

The Queen to the Marquis of Salisbury.

WINDSOR CASTLE, May 1, 1891.

The Queen highly approves of Mr Smith's being offered the office of Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports. No one deserves it more than he does.

Some foolish comments were made at the time on Smith's acceptance of this office. It was murmured that it was a post which should have been reserved for some Minister in circumstances other than affluent, who had not, like Smith, a country residence of his own. How little these critics understood the motives which had led to the offer being made and accepted! So far from the Wardenship being an office of profit, Lord Salisbury wrote about it: "I made a mistake in thinking it should be reserved as an assistance to a poor man. It is a white elephant of the whitest kind." In former days it was indeed a lucrative post, and the Lord Warden used to derive £3000 or £4000 a-year from the proceeds of wreckage; but latterly there has been no income of any sort, but on the contrary a heavy expenditure in upkeep and household charges.

The usual letters of congratulation poured in, but there was a touch of pathos in them, arising from the precarious state of the new Lord Warden's health.

May you and yours [wrote Sir Henry Acland] long enjoy the peaceful retreat, looking from the Great Duke's

window over the Downs and imbibing the lovely sea-breeze that ever moves along the shore.



W. H. Smith in his new character as Warden of the Cinque Ports and Constable of Dover Castle.¹

Among the many letters of congratulation which Smith received was one from a naval officer of high rank, containing an amusing anecdote :—

In 1870 I was lying in the Downs with two other ships. Mr Gladstone, then Prime Minister, was stopping

¹ Reproduced from 'Punch' by permission of the proprietors.

at Walmer Castle with your predecessor, and they intimated their intention of visiting the senior officer, who at once turned to the Regulations to see what honours a Prime Minister was entitled to on visiting a man-of-war, and nothing could be found. Here was a dilemma! but fortunately it was found that the Ld. Warden is entitled to 19 guns in his own jurisdiction, so yards were manned & the salute fired, and Mr Gladstone stood up and graciously bowed, & took to himself what was really meant for the Lord Warden.

According to the archaic rule which compels all members accepting office under the Crown to vacate their seats and offer themselves for re-election, Smith had to go through the form of an appeal to the Strand electors. He was not opposed, and the manner of his reception by the House on taking his seat is best shown by an extract from the parliamentary report of an evening paper, the ‘Pall Mall Gazette,’ at that time strongly Radical in politics, and surely not predisposed in favour of the Tory leader:—

“Members desiring to take their seats will now come to the table,” shouts the Speaker in stentorian tones, and behold! there marches up to the table a member whom we seem to have seen before. He blushes, but he is not in the first bloom of his manhood: he smiles nervously in response to the ringing cheers that greet him from all parts of the House, but he goes through the ceremonies of introduction—not with the awkwardness of a new member, but with all the grace and ease of one who has known

them from his childhood up. And the curious thing is this, though he is obviously a Tory member, the whole House joins in his welcome, and grins from ear to ear with satisfaction, as at the coming of some very dear old friend. Curious? it is not at all curious; for who should this member be but the most popular man that has led the House of Commons for the last twenty years—Mr W. H. Smith.

This was on May 12: on the 14th Smith went to spend the short Whitsuntide recess at Cadenabbia, whence he returned on May 27. A month later he was laid low by an attack of gout. Though unable to be in his place in the House of Commons, he managed with great difficulty to attend a meeting of the Cabinet on June 20.

Gout has seized on my right ankle [he wrote to Miss Giberne on his birthday, the 24th], but I am told it is good for me, which I believe, and that I shall be better in a day or two. Meanwhile I cannot go to the House or to Windsor, where I am summoned to-day, and so I have rest to a certain extent.

Every one is very kind and very good to me, and I think I am as careful as I can be if I go on with my work, which I don't see my way, as a matter of conscience, yet to throw up. . . . I am 66, and have no sorrow with any one of my children.

God has been very merciful to me.

The last words spoken by Smith in the House of Commons were on July 10, in reply to a question by the Hon. Philip Stanhope, who asked

him if her Majesty's Government would convey to the French Government an invitation to the President of the French Republic to visit England. Mr Smith replied that it was not in accordance with usage for her Majesty's Ministers to convey invitations of this kind; but the head of the French Republic or of any other friendly nation would always receive a cordial welcome in this country.

On July 11 he was well enough to go to Hatfield to meet the German Emperor, but many who spoke to him there were shocked with his wasted, worn look. This was, indeed, his last appearance in public, and though the symptoms of his malady became much more serious, he made light of them in writing to Mrs Smith. In the letter which he addressed to her from Hatfield, there was brought to a close the long and sympathetic correspondence which had endured throughout their wedded life:—

HATFIELD HOUSE, 12th July 1891. 7 P.M.

MY DEAREST WIFE,—Everything has gone off wonderfully well to-day. The weather has been perfect for Hatfield. The place is looking beautiful, and everybody says so, which must be very satisfactory to the Salisburys.

They have been very kind to me, and, observing I looked tired last night, Lady Salisbury urged me to go to bed early, which I did, and to-day I have rested a great deal in my room. The house is so crowded that many of

the guests are sleeping out in the town, and amongst them George Hamilton and Stanhope, but I am lodged comfortably in a quiet corner of the house.

I am still uncomfortable, and am clearly not yet fit for the iron, which I shall not take again until I have seen Powell.

I hope it has not been an unhappy day for you. It would have been happier for me if I had been with you, but I think it was right to come under the circumstances.
—Your loving husband,

W. H. SMITH.

Mr Balfour, observing how ill he looked, urged Smith to send for a doctor, but he, well knowing that he would have been ordered to lay up at once, would not consent to do so. He returned to London on the 13th exceedingly ill, and for a day or two his condition was very grave. Needless to say that he lacked nothing that medical skill or loving care could provide, and the more acute symptoms were allayed, but it was nearly six weeks before he could be moved from his house in Grosvenor Place. This severe illness was not suffered to interfere with an annual *fête* which Smith used to provide for the police attending at the House of Commons, and for the messengers, doorkeepers, and others employed there. He directed arrangements to be made as usual, and the excursion to Greenlands took place towards the end of July, just as if the owner of that beautiful place had been strong and well.

During this time the utmost sympathy was shown by persons of all classes and every political party, and it may gratify those who either wrote to inquire or called personally to know that their attention did much to brighten the tedium of the sick-room. All inquiries were regularly reported, all messages faithfully delivered, and all letters were read to the invalid, who repeatedly expressed his gratitude for them. Mr Gladstone called personally to make a last inquiry before leaving London for the recess, and sent a kindly message up-stairs to the rival leader of the Commons; but Smith was too ill at the time to see any except members of his own family. Just before leave was given by the doctors to attempt the move to Walmer, Lord Salisbury and one or two intimate colleagues were admitted to take a short farewell.

On August 20 Mr Smith, accompanied by Mrs Smith and some members of his family, travelled to Walmer. The London, Chatham, and Dover Railway Company placed a special train at his disposal, and were at great pains to make the journey easy for the sick man. The driver of the train was directed to pass slowly round curves and over points; and this did not escape the attention of Mr Smith, for while he was being lifted to his carriage at Walmer Station



IN THE GARDENS, WALMER CASTLE.

he sent Mr Pattisson to thank the driver and other officials for their care of him, and to telegraph to Mr Cockburn, the General Manager at Victoria, his gratitude for the arrangements so thoughtfully made and carried out.

No dwelling could have been better calculated to restore Smith's shattered health than the romantic old castle of Walmer. Flanked on the landward side by a delightful old-fashioned garden, and commanding from its sunny front and rampart walks a glorious view over the Downs and Goodwin Sands, it was just the place where Smith, with his double love for flowers and ships, might spend his convalescence in leisurely contemplation. Scarcely a sound broke the stillness, save the measured plunge of waves on the beach or the cry of circling sea-birds, and steam and sailing vessels passed in endless silent procession, taking the inner channel almost under the windows of the castle.

Much was hoped from the change, but it was still some time before much benefit was apparent. Smith remained quite unable to walk, and could only take the air in short drives in a carriage or bath-chair. His one wish was to get afloat. The Pandora lay at anchor off the castle, and to get him on board would have been a risky undertaking, for the beach at Walmer is still

as bad to embark from as Nelson found it when he visited Pitt. Deal Pier, besides being at some distance, was not much better, for there were the slippery steps down which the invalid would have to be carried; and Dover Harbour was too far away. At last, however, so strong was the desire of the patient, that the experiment was made upon Dr Wethered, who was carried on a litter down the steep beach, as Mr Smith would have had to be, by a party of sailors. The litter was then laid on the thwarts of the boat, which, having been towed out to the yacht, was hoisted on the davits, and the litter taken out and placed on deck. It was well that the operation was rehearsed, for the doctor was within an ace of being tilted into the sea.

Next day (September 11) Mr Smith was conveyed on board in this manner without accident, and several hours were spent cruising in the Channel. Thereafter, whenever the weather was favourable, these excursions were repeated, and his strength seemed to be slowly returning. He became able to take short turns on deck, leaning on a friendly arm; but his chief pleasure was to sit or lie, with wife or daughter beside him, watching the shipping of all nationalities passing up and down the Channel; and he would

have the yacht steered close to any vessel of remarkable beauty or interest, such as a four-masted clipper under full sail. One day, to his great delight, he was accompanied in his cruise by Mr Jackson¹ and Mr Akers Douglas, the two Secretaries to the Treasury, who were deeply moved with sympathy for the condition of their beloved chief.

All this time, in spite of his weakness, Smith found resolution to transact with his secretary, Mr Pattisson, such business as came by post. Faithful to old habits, he wrote many letters to his friends, and settled several questions of patronage and other matters belonging to the office of First Lord of the Treasury.

On Thursday, October 1, he was at sea for a few hours, and seemed so much better that, at his special desire, those members of his family who had visiting engagements prepared to carry them out. Accordingly Mr Smith was left alone with his wife and Mrs Codrington, and by the doctor's advice a house was taken in Torquay for the winter months.

On Friday, October 2, there was a rough sea

¹ The Right Hon. W. L. Jackson, M.P., succeeded Mr Balfour as Chief Secretary to the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland when the latter became First Lord of the Treasury on Mr Smith's death.

on, but he was carried down over the beach, and with some difficulty placed in the gig. "Ah! this is like life itself," he observed to Captain Blow, as he felt the motion of the boat; "your treatment is doing me good. I feel some hopes now." It was the last time he was on board his beloved yacht. The casket of Pandora did not fail to yield him hope, but it was a hope to be realised in another world: he had done with the hopes, loves, cares, and anxieties of this one.

CHAPTER XIII.

1891.

MR SMITH'S LAST ILLNESS—HIS DEATH ON OCTOBER 6—MESSAGE AND LETTER FROM THE QUEEN—LETTER FROM MR GLADSTONE—THE FUNERAL—MEMORIAL SERVICE IN WESTMINSTER ABBEY—THE QUEEN BESTOWS A PEERAGE ON MRS SMITH—HON. W. F. SMITH ELECTED FOR THE STRAND—SMITH'S GIFT OF THE RELICS AT WALMER TO THE NATION—REVIEW OF SMITH'S CHARACTER AND LIFE—HIS UNSELFISHNESS AND HONESTY—HIS RELIGIOUS FEELING AND COMMON-SENSE—SMITH AS A PARTY MAN—CONCLUSION.

THE improvement visible on Friday was maintained with some fluctuations through Sunday, and Mr Smith's son left to join his sisters in Devonshire. On Monday the 5th Smith was up and dressed in the drawing-room overlooking the Downs. He asked Mr Pattisson if there was anything in his letters requiring attention, who replied that there was one from Lord George Hamilton on a rather difficult question, and suggested deferring it to another day. Smith, however, desired that it should be read to him, and dictated a sentence bearing on the point

raised ; but, feeling unequal to the exertion, he gave it up, saying, “No : tell George I am not well enough to deal with it.”

He then gave instructions to prepare submissions to the Queen in regard to two vacant Crown livings, and, lastly, to get ready for his signature two cheques on his private account to pay his doctors’ fees. Mr Pattisson, noticing that he was in great pain, suggested that they should be paid out of his (Mr Pattisson’s) account, so as to save his chief the exertion of signing them. But he, smiling, said, “No ; it is a little compliment to them if I sign my own cheques, and I should like to do so.” The cheques were accordingly drawn on his own account, and thus the last occasion he ever put pen to paper was characteristic of his whole life, for it arose out of a desire to show consideration for others.

On the following morning, Tuesday, October 6, an alarming change took place. Dr Wethered, who had been constantly resident at the castle since his patient had arrived there, was called in between 6 and 7 A.M., and found that the heart’s action had suddenly failed. Stimulants revived it for a while, but the terrible news had to be conveyed by Mrs Codrington to Mrs Smith that there was little hope of Mr Smith surviving that day. Telegrams were sent to the absent mem-



DRAWING-ROOM, WALMER CASTLE.

This was followed by a letter which conveyed more fully her Majesty's sympathy with her bereaved subject :—

BALMORAL CASTLE, Oct. 7, 1891.

DEAR MRS SMITH,—As I telegraphed, it is quite impossible for me to express how deeply grieved and shocked I was at the unexpected news of dear Mr Smith's suddenly increased illness, to be followed so soon by the very sad news that he had passed away. I feel most deeply for you, and fear that his unceasing devotion to his country and Sovereign has shortened his most valuable life! I cannot sufficiently express my sense of gratitude to him for his invaluable services, or how deeply I mourn his loss, which is so great to the country. He has left behind him a bright example, and will be deeply mourned and regretted by *all*.

But to you, dear Mrs Smith, the loss is the greatest and the blow is the heaviest, and I pray God to support you and enable you to submit to His dispensation; but it is very difficult to say, "Thy will be done."

Asking you to convey to your children the expression of my sympathy, pray believe me always,—Yours most sincerely,

VICTORIA R. I.

Other letters of condolence and many telegrams streamed in, but it avails not to quote more than one of each of these. A letter came from Smith's chief political opponent, Mr Gladstone, to Mr Pattison :—

HAWARDEN, Oct. 7, '91.

MY DEAR SIR,—Your great kindness in making known to me by telegraph the sad event of yesterday calls for

my best thanks, while the calamity calls forth my deep and cordial sympathy, and that of my wife and those members of my family who are present with me.

The intelligence was, to us, matter of surprise almost as much as of grief. To me it is almost shocking that one so much younger than myself should have been called away before me; and it will be a sad day for us all when, if spared, we meet in the House of Commons with his place vacant.

I earnestly hope that Mrs Smith and his family bear up, and are borne up, under this heavy stroke. They will receive in abundance every consolation that can be drawn from the universal regard and affection for the departed, and I trust, and cannot doubt, that they also draw their comfort from a higher source. If and when you think it will not be intrusive, I would beg you to convey to Mrs Smith the expression of our respectful sympathy.—I remain, my dear sir, yours very faithfully,

W. E. GLADSTONE.

Among the scores of telegrams there was one of extreme simplicity, in form and significance equally classical and Christian, but of which the source must remain matter of speculation. It consisted of three words only:—

Beatus ille. GEORGE.

The funeral was extremely simple. The body was conveyed from Walmer Castle to Henley on the morning of Saturday, October 10, and thence by the Marlow road to Hambleden Church.

Among other offerings of affection and respect there was a wreath sent by the Queen, bearing, in her Majesty's autograph, the inscription—

A mark of sincere regard and gratitude for devoted services to his Sovereign and country—from

VICTORIA R. I.

It was a day of mournful rain, yet hundreds followed the bier of their friend and benefactor to the new cemetery at Hambleden. There they laid him in the grave, and before it closed over him the clear voices of the choir raised a strain of confident hope in the hymn: "The saints of God, their conflict passed."

More stately, though not more impressive, was the Memorial Service in Westminster Abbey, by which the nation did honour to the memory of its departed servant: of the vast number assembled there that day, none can have forgotten the hymn which closed the service—"Now the labourer's task is o'er."

On October 12 the Queen wrote once more:—

DEAR MRS SMITH,—I am most desirous, as you will easily believe, to give a public mark of my deep sense of the services your beloved Husband rendered to me and to his country—services which I fear shortened his valuable life.

I wish therefore to offer to you, his devoted wife, a



Fig. 1. *Gravure de l'édifice.*

Peerage—a Viscounty—which I hope you will feel inclined to accept for his sake. Truly thankful am I to hear that you are able to bear up under your overwhelming affliction, and trust that the universal mourning for your dear Husband's loss, and the equally universal appreciation of his services and character, will be soothing to you.—Believe me always, yours most sincerely,

VICTORIA *R. I.*

Had Mrs Smith consulted her own inclinations, she would have preferred to continue to bear that name which was associated so closely with the happiness and pride of her life; but the Queen's offer, couched in language so gracious and warmly appreciative of the services of the departed, was one that could hardly be declined, and Mrs Smith, taking her title from the village and parish where her husband had been so well known and loved and where his mortal part had been laid, became Viscountess Hambleden.

Mr Smith's old constituents in the Strand also exerted themselves to do honour to his memory by selecting his son, the Hon. W. F. D. Smith, who had already a few months previously been invited to stand for the Hitchin Division of Hertfordshire, to represent them in Parliament, and elected him by a majority of 3006 votes over his Gladstonian opponent, Dr Gutteridge.¹

¹ Mr Frederick Smith's nomination at the general election of 1892 was unopposed.

Brief as was the time during which Smith held the Lord Wardenship, it was marked by a graceful token of his public spirit and generosity. He learnt to his surprise, on appointment, that the memorials of Mr Pitt and the Duke of Wellington which are preserved at Walmer Castle had never been secured to the nation, but that it had been the custom of each succeeding Lord Warden to take over from his predecessor the furniture and other effects, including these relics, at a valuation. These became in every instance the private property of the Lord Warden, and it was in his option to dispose of them as he thought fit.

The historical interest attached to some of the articles tended, as time went on, to increase the price fixed by valuation far beyond their intrinsic worth ; and Lord Palmerston demurred at taking over the furniture at the valuation put on it at the time of his appointment. Lord Dalhousie then directed that they should be sold by auction, but Lord Palmerston changed his mind, when it was proved to him that the prices which would have been realised would undoubtedly have far exceeded the sum fixed by the valuers.

Meanwhile, the Duke of Wellington's son, alarmed at the effect of the projected sale, obtained leave from the representatives of the

deceased Lord Warden, the Earl of Dalhousie, to remove to Apsley House some of the furniture more especially connected with his father's memory — such as the little camp-bed he regularly slept in, the arm-chair in which he died, and the folding-chair used in his campaigns. When Lord Granville succeeded Lord Palmerston as Lord Warden in 1865, much of the furniture associated with Mr Pitt and the Duke of Wellington had disappeared, either from wear and tear or having been given away. But much still remained ; and Lord Granville, during his twenty-six years as Lord Warden, not only carefully preserved them, but succeeded in recovering many articles which had found their way into other houses, and caused each piece to be marked with a small brass plate recording its history.

Following Lord Granville in 1891, Mr W. H. Smith was fully sensible of the interesting nature of these memorials, and determined to do all in his power to preserve them from further vicissitudes, by making them heirlooms to future Lords Warden, and inalienable from the Castle. This purpose was frustrated by his death ; but his son, the Hon. W. F. D. Smith, has carried it out with the Queen's approval — Walmer being a royal castle — and the concurrence of the Marquis of Salisbury (then Prime Minister) and the Mar-

quis of Dufferin and Ava, the present Lord Warden. Moreover, the present Duke of Wellington, on hearing of the intentions of Mr Smith, at once offered to restore to Walmer Castle the articles which had been removed to Apsley House, on condition that they also should be included in the list of heirlooms, and should be replaced and kept in the Duke's room.

Altogether [as is recorded by a writer in the 'Times' of April 23, 1892] nearly seventy pieces of furniture, and fifty pictures and engravings, known to have belonged either to Mr Pitt or the Duke, have been scheduled, besides an interesting series of nearly forty engraved portraits of former Lord Wardens, collected by the late Lord Granville. One personal article belonging to the late Lord Warden, the telescope used at Walmer by Mr Smith, is appropriately added by his son. The legal deed makes the Secretary of State for War for the time being—in whom already the custody of the fabric of the castle is vested—trustee of the heirlooms. It is not an unhappy coincidence that the first trustee should be the son¹ of the late Earl Stanhope, the biographer of Pitt and friend of Wellington, to whom the country principally owes the details of the Walmer life of these great men. Great care has been taken to authenticate every article scheduled. . . . That such authentication was necessary, may be inferred from the fact that a curious but convenient boot-cleaning machine, standing in the entrance to the castle, often of late shown to visitors as "the Duke's own, where his grace took the

¹ The Right Hon. Edward Stanhope, M.P.

mud off his own boots," proved to be a modern invention purchased by Lord Granville. Future mistakes of this sort will be obviated, as each article is now to be marked with a little brass plate or label, corresponding with a fixed list in the castle.

In estimating the standing of William Henry Smith among British statesmen, one is tempted to alter the judgment passed by Sydney Smith upon Joseph Hume, "He was an extraordinarily ordinary man," into one of very different significance, though almost identical form, "He was an extraordinary ordinary man."

A life of almost unchecked prosperity and integrity, as steadfast in the transaction of public affairs as it was constant in commercial concerns and domestic relations, does not in itself suffice to account for the universal regret felt and expressed among all degrees of people, and all groups of politicians, at the news of Smith's death. Another parliamentary leader breathed his last on the same day—one who, having entered Parliament about the same time as Smith, had aroused devotion among his followers far more passionate, exercised an influence upon the course of events far more imperious, and engrossed a far larger share of public attention, than the leader of the House

of Commons. But the career of Charles Stuart Parnell closed in darkness and disappointment; around his grave in Glasnevin Cemetery was concentrated all the bitterness of faction and loud-voiced discord; his memory has been a legacy of angry recrimination and personal hate. It has been impossible since his death for many of his old followers to mention Parnell's name on a public platform save as the object or engine of execration, and the surest element to complete the acrimony of controversy has found its way into it in the shape of priestly interference.

How different were the circumstances attending and the feelings evoked by the close of the earthly work of the man whose story fills these pages! Men felt, as they laid his body in the quiet little wayside cemetery at Hambleden, among the dripping autumn woods, that they were parting with one of the truest servants that ever undertook a trust, one of the staunchest friends that ever clasped a hand. More puissant statesmen have been taken from their places, and left a sense of lighter loss. When Sir Robert Peel's horse fell with him on Constitution Hill, when the reins of government slipped from the firm adroit hand of Lord Palmerston, when the bold and earnest hoarseness of John Bright's voice was hushed for ever—there was national

mourning, deepened by that which never fails to add poignancy to regret, that all of these died at their posts; but scarcely (if memory is to be trusted after many years) was the acclaim "Well done!" pronounced for them in such full accord as for the modest-minded Englishman, whom these had far outshone in brilliancy—*ποικιλία*—and legislative achievement.

And if there was this difference in the manner and effect of the deaths of these two men—Smith and Parnell—not less different had been the manner of their public lives. Parnell—a masterful spirit, unscrupulous, resolute, ruthless—forced his old leader out of his place and seized it for himself: Smith was so far from coveting advancement that Mr George Curzon once said of him at a public meeting that he was the only modern leader who was a leader because his followers sought him out and insisted on following him.

Wherein, then, is to be found that quality which—distinguishing Smith above other public men of whose gifts we are proud, whose careers we cherish as part of the grandeur of our history, who have endeared themselves by personal qualities or ennobled themselves by high achievement—secured for him the approval of those whom he resisted, as well as those with whom he worked? To learn the secret one must re-

turn to Athens—how often must we return to that precocious inflorescence of human culture, Athens, socially and politically incoherent, yet intellectually supreme!—and ponder over the definition which Plato, with astounding fore-reach and penetration, laid down of the chief essential to perfect government, and made the keynote of his ideal state — his Perfect City — *Καλλίπολις*. The faculty of just rule lies in the magnanimity and lofty altruism which move a man, so far from seeking public office as a reward, to accept it as a duty, even at the sacrifice of the inclinations he cherishes most closely.

Whom then will you compel to proceed to the guardianship of the city save those who, being wisest of all in regard to the conditions of her highest welfare, are themselves possessed of privileges of another order, and a life better than the politician's? . . . For in that city alone will those be rulers who are in very deed rich. But if poor men, hungering after their private good, proceed to public offices, it is not possible; for the ruler's office becoming an object of contention, the sort of battle which results, being at home and internal, destroys them along with the community.¹

¹ Plato's 'Republic,' 520. The whole passage deserves reading again and again, for it shows how the great philosopher mistrusted that sordid logic which seems to be driving us at this time towards payment of members of Parliament, and ultimately, by the same reasoning, to that of every one who undertakes duty for the State, the county, or the parish.

If ever there was a temper in man fitted for Plato's ideal Philadelphia, that temper was found in William Henry Smith. He possessed, as has been amply shown, "privileges of another order and a life better than the politician's." He was an instance of a wealthy man rising above his material environment into loftier levels of thought upon which those who have riches shall hardly enter. With ample and ever-increasing means, and none of that habit of parsimony which so often forbids self-made men to enjoy their money—with a home circle undisturbed by the faintest echo of discord and unshadowed by the lightest cloud of distrust—with a constant longing for the society of his wife and children—there could be no suspicion of self-seeking in Smith's advance from one public office to another. Undoubtedly there are men, even in these days of opportunism, who, penetrated with the true public spirit, take a manful part in the struggle; just as there are others who, despairing of serving usefully, refrain from the scramble of politics and efface themselves: but both of these may fail to impress the public with a sense of their disinterestedness.

"Scire tuum nihil est, nisi te scire hoc sciat alter,"

—it is of no avail to be conscious of high principles

unless you can convince others you are carrying them into effect.

Smith commanded confidence and gratitude because it was understood that he was serving no private end in accepting office. Latterly it was also well known that he remained at his post at the risk of his life, and that he was suffering, not from the vengeance of a constitution overtasked in the indulgence of material pleasure or vitiated by descent from a plethoric ancestry, but because he could not bring himself to heed repeated warnings that his task was beyond his powers.

The House of Commons, with all its faults and absurdity, remains, probably, the justest tribunal in the world in the matter of estimating character. A man must have ill luck far beyond his fellows if he falls into unmerited disgrace or distrust in that assembly, for the opinion of the House of Commons is the epitome of public opinion, and if the State is healthy, error of public instinct is rarely more than temporary. But it may seem strange that unselfishness or disinterestedness should be the foundation of repute in Parliament, where, the more one sees of its inner working, the deeper grows the conviction that ninety-nine hundredths of party men are directly actuated by self-interest. "If you don't look after yourself no one else will trouble himself about you," is

the all but universal maxim, as any Patronage Secretary could state from his daily experience. Why then should unselfishness obtain ascendancy and command approval among persons notoriously—almost confessedly—self-seeking? For the same reason, it may be believed, that in the transpontine drama virtue is always made to triumph more signally than in theatres where the audience is drawn from levels of greater refinement; because it is found from experience that those whose environment makes them most familiar with actual violence and overt lawlessness are most readily pleased by the discomfiture of villany. It may seem cynical to suggest it, but perhaps the reason why politicians paid involuntary homage to Smith for his altruism was that they were conscious how rare a quality it was among themselves.

Not less conspicuous than Smith's unselfishness and want of personal ambition was his honesty. Nobody in the House of Commons ever suspected him of insincerity. "There is no art to find the mind's construction in the face," yet such a countenance as his could hardly have shaped itself into the mask of treachery or double meaning. "Duty" was the word that came most familiarly to his lips; and men learned to know that with him it was no conventional term, but the index of

the thought ever uppermost in his mind. "It is my duty in the interests of the public service"—"it is our duty to the country and to this House"—these phrases occurred so often in his speeches from the Treasury Bench as to raise, in the early days of his leadership, a good-humoured titter among the Opposition, and were even the cause of occasional impatience among followers accustomed to the brilliant oratory and formidable sallies of his immediate predecessor. But it was not very long before men of all sections came to recognise in these words the expression of an inflexible principle on which all his action was moulded. The word Duty sounds coldly, even harshly, in some ears: it is a guide which takes a man along rough roads, often to lodging of little ease—a *numen* which has exacted many a martyrdom. The sacrifice is sometimes made in dramatic circumstance: the soldier on the blood-soaked field—the seaman on the sinking ship—the fireman on the crumbling wall—ay, even the familiar policeman on his beat—may present a spectacle to touch us more shrewdly than this elderly English gentleman, homely in features and simple in speech, sitting hour after hour, night after night, encouraging his party by his presence to endure the endless repetition of frivolous verbosity, and violent, at times vulgar,

invective. Not the less was Smith spending his health and, as it turned out, his life, in the cause of duty. He had put his hand to a task which was none of his own seeking, because he conceived it to be his duty, and he would not risk its failure by sparing himself, even at the repeated entreaty of his colleagues. In vain they used to beg him to go home at times when, long after midnight, no urgent or critical business remained to be discussed; and those who can recall to mind his appearance that night in July when he sat on the Treasury Bench for the last time, his legs wrapped in a black rug, suffering acutely, yet patiently attentive to an interminable discussion in Committee of Supply, possess a recollection of self-sacrifice which, though it might easily be more picturesque, could not be more pathetic or inspiring.

Lastly, there were two qualities which helped almost as much as those already described to ensure to Smith the confidence of his party in the House and outside it, and the respect of his opponents. One of these was that he was known to be deeply and earnestly religious, and there is still enough of Puritan heredity among our people to incline them to trust their affairs to the keeping of a sincere Christian. Even the most active enemies of faith feel that from one

who embraces and endeavours to carry into effect the pure morality of Jesus Christ, without concerning himself about doctrinal controversy, they are sure to receive the best he has to give. An instance of the mutual respect borne by honest men for each other occurred during the autumn of 1886. Smith was then Secretary of State for War. Mr Fleetwood Wilson, his private secretary at the War Office, happened to be travelling down to Greenlands to shoot. In the same compartment sat Mr Charles Bradlaugh, who was going to fish in the Thames. They entered into conversation, and when Bradlaugh heard what was Mr Wilson's destination, he said, in his usual energetic way, "Ah, you're going to stay with Mr Smith; well, I don't suppose there is a man in the House of Commons or in England with whom I am more widely at variance on many subjects, yet there is none for whom I have a more profound respect." After dinner, Mr Wilson happened to mention to his host that Bradlaugh had been his fellow-traveller from London. "Indeed," replied Smith; "well, it's a strange thing,—I don't believe there is a man whose opinions I hold in greater abhorrence than Bradlaugh, but I cannot help feeling that there is not an honester man in Parliament."

The other quality alluded to as contributing to Smith's influence as a party leader was his strong

common-sense. It may have been that people turned to him for guidance all the readier because they were bewildered by the meteoric rise and sudden eclipse of Lord Randolph Churchill. Tired of surprises, they looked about for one on whom they might rely for plain, plodding discharge of necessary work. And they gratefully placed that reliance on Smith. The author of 'Rab and his Friends' has described how a young Scottish minister came to consult with the Rev. John Brown of Haddington as to the place to be assigned to grace in the divine economy. The elder divine was on the point of setting out on an expedition to a distant part of the parish. "Come away wi' me," said he, "and I'll expound that; but when I'm speaking, look you after my feet." They started, and the aged pastor was soon in full swing of argument on a favourite subject, and his listener too intent to mind his part of the compact, till, in crossing a bit of moorland, Mr Brown put his foot in a hole and fell heavily. He rose again and said sharply, "James, the grace o' God can do muckle, but it canna gie a man common-sense."

And so the House of Commons and the people of England were content to dispense with eloquence and other brilliant qualities which contribute to the fame of a statesman, and accepted

in lieu the unselfishness, uprightness, sincerity, and excellent business qualities—the common-sense—which distinguished Smith among many others who have shone with far more dazzling light in the offices held by him.

Smith was a good party man, and such solidarity as the modern Conservative party can boast of is owing almost as much to his unostentatious influence as to the more patent guidance of Beaconsfield or the dashing polemics of Lord Randolph Churchill. But this quiet, thoughtful statesman cherished a higher ideal of politics than the mere predominance of one party over another. He looked upon that merely as the rude means to a good end, but he yearned for a more rational and businesslike system. During his first term of office in the Cabinet, he was walking home with Dr (now Sir Henry) Acland of Oxford. They had been dining at Grillons—a quaint old club of a few members, of which Dr Acland's father had been one of the founders in 1810. The conversation turned on the state of parties, and Smith expressed regret that all the best efforts were made on behalf of party instead of for the country, according to the conclusions of the best men.

“How much better it would be,” suggested Acland, “if an administrative committee could

be agreed on, including the best men on each side in Parliament."

Smith cordially agreed in this idea, and immediately named six men, of whom W. E. Forster and Northcote were two.

Some years later a correspondent made grateful acknowledgment for some remarks which had fallen from Smith :—

I cannot conclude without expressing my gratitude that you should have said frankly this morning that there is something higher and better than party—viz., country—and that the country's interests and the country's welfare must be, and ought to be, the first consideration in this and all things. I so entirely share your views on this point, I so abominate what is called "opportunism"—hateful word—and I have found so few politicians who have the courage to utter these sentiments, that I cannot adequately express to you my feeling of pleasure and satisfaction at what fell from yourself this morning.

If any success has attended the writer's attempt to explain the straightforward, unaffected character of this man, it must have been apparent how far it was from his nature to disguise from himself his connection with the commercial middle class, or attempt to make other people forget it. Even when the duties of the public offices which he successively filled had brought him into frequent and sometimes intimate intercourse with persons of most exalted rank, he

found time to keep up the associations of his early life and original calling. Thus in 1887 he had the honour of receiving at Greenlands a distinguished party of guests, including the King and Queen of Denmark, the King and Queen of Greece, and other royal personages. Not long after it fell to him to preside, as one of their number, at the annual dinner of the Prince of Wales's tradesmen. Though he had raised his life to a higher level than can be attained by more than very few individuals, he never suffered himself to neglect or ignore his early associates.

Every one who has filled political office under the Crown must have been penetrated in greater or less degree by a sense of the devoted service rendered by the permanent officials in the various public departments. Ministers come and go, as the popular breath wafts this or that party in or out of power; but the permanent secretaries and clerks continue at their posts, and are expected, and, it may truly be said, never fail, to yield patient and laborious aid to those men, necessarily inexperienced, whom the turn of events places in brief authority over them. They may have ambition, yet their duty lies within fixed bounds which they may not transgress. A Chancellor of the Exchequer reaps renown when he produces a brilliant Budget, but no popular

applause reaches those upon whom has fallen the labour of working out the complicated details, and, it may be, of constructing the financial scheme. They may have keen political sympathies, yet these must be rigidly kept in abeyance; and often it has happened that they are called on to construct the framework of a measure odious to their private judgment. The Civil Service of Great Britain—modest, incorruptible, indefatigable—is one of the most perfect systems that has ever existed on the face of the earth. It can boast no Trafalgar or Waterloo, but in duty manfully done it is excelled by neither of the militant services of the Crown.

No one ever recognised this more heartily than Smith, no one was more watchful in endeavouring to lighten and assist their toil, and no Minister ever received in return a fuller measure of their confidence. Not even the humblest member of the Civil Service escaped his attention, as the following instance may tend to prove. When Smith was at the War Office, his private secretary, Mr Fleetwood Wilson, noticed that at the end of a week's work, when his chief was preparing to leave for Greenland on Saturday afternoon, he used to pack a despatch-box with the papers he required to take with him, and carry it himself on his journey.

Mr Wilson remarked that Mr Smith would save himself much trouble if he did as was the practice of other Ministers—leave the papers to be put in an office “pouch” and sent by post. Mr Smith looked rather ashamed for a moment, and then, looking up at his secretary, said—“Well, my dear Wilson, the fact is this: our postman who brings the letters from Henley has plenty to carry. I watched him one morning coming up the approach with my heavy pouch in addition to his usual load, and I determined to save him as much as I could.”

It has sometimes been said that Smith was deficient in imagination, but the power of perceiving small opportunities such as this to lighten the work of one's fellow-men depends primarily on a sensitive imagination.

The narrative of this life is no history of a sovereign intellect, wrestling with tyrannical power or formidable opponents, maimed in action and thwarted in council by the timidity or treachery of colleagues, and tormented by the allurements which too often prevail to bring frail humanity to ruin: it is but the plain tale of wise conduct, fulfilled duty, and warm affection, continued till the vital powers gave way under the stress of labour imposed upon them.

Surely never was a life more blamelessly led

or more happily ended—ended too soon, as many believed, for the good of his country and his party, yet ended before the scope of usefulness had begun to contract, or the tide of affection to slacken. He was spared the mortifying pang which often embitters the closing years of public men, arising either from conscious failure of the powers which have led their possessor to high station, or from some turn of events which has diverted the stream of popular confidence. There is a pathetic saying of Robert Lowe in his declining years, treasured up by one of his surviving friends, who once asked him about the state of his health. He shook his white head sadly, and replied, “There is just this difference between me and ——” (naming a former colleague who has since died); “I am going mad—and I know it: he is going mad—and he doesn’t know it.”

William Henry Smith died at the age of sixty-six. He approached his end in full consciousness: the mind up to the last hour never lost its calm, resolute purpose to persevere; though its companion, the body, drooped wearily and moaned for rest, the higher and immortal part remained as steadfast as in the summertide of life. Of physical suffering he had endured large measure—the vengeance of a constitution sorely overtaxed. The silver cord was deeply frayed ere

it parted, but the lamp of love and intelligence beamed clearly to the end, and of him it may more surely be written than of many who have held high place :—

TU VERO FELIX
NON VITÆ TANTUM CLARITATE,
SED ETIAM
OPPORTUNITATE MORTIS.¹

¹ Yet wert thou happy, not only by the radiance of thy life, but also by the circumstance of thy death.

APPENDIX.

MEMORANDUM BY THE RIGHT HON. MONTIFORD LONGFIELD
ON THE IRISH LAND QUESTION.

(See page 61.)

47 FITZWILLIAM SQUARE,
DUBLIN, *Ap.* 14/82.

MY DEAR SIR,—According to your desire I send you notes of the substance of the opinions which I expressed in a conversation I had the pleasure of having with you and Mr Gibson in FitzW^m. Square.—Yours faithfully,

M. LONGFIELD.

The Right Hon. W. H. SMITH, M.P.

It is unnecessary to discuss the relative economical advantages of large and small estates. The political superiority of many small estates over a few large properties is obvious. Every property in land enlists, *pro tanto*, its proprietor in the cause of law and order against anarchy and tumult.

There will always be a number of young men, with some education and little or no property, who will be discontented, and will strive to make some change that may lift them into what they consider their proper position. But

if the owners of land are numerous, the agitators will not be able to obtain that influence among the masses without which they cannot do much mischief. The inert conservatism of property will naturally be on the side of law and order, unless a tangible prize can be held out as the reward of successful violence. This prize was held out to the farmer in the time of the tithe agitation, as it is now in the agitation against rent. Every man saw distinctly what his share of the booty would be if the agitation was successful.

No similar prize could be held forth to the fee-simple proprietor of a farm, however small. He could not hope to enlarge his farm at the expense of his neighbours. The loss to him from anarchy would be certain and immediate, the gain uncertain and remote.

We may therefore assume that it would be politically desirable that, in as many cases as possible, the occupiers should be the absolute owners of the land. The question to be solved is, How may this state of things be brought about without confiscation or robbery, which would produce worse than the existing evils?

Much may be done by such alterations in the laws relating to land as would make them favourable to the acquisition and retention of small estates. But the full results of such changes would not be felt until after the lapse of several generations, and the present condition of Ireland requires a more speedy remedy. But if the occupier is to become owner neither by confiscation nor by the slow operation of altered land laws, it seems to follow that he must become proprietor by purchase. In many cases the farmer will be able and willing to purchase the fee-simple of his farm, if all legal and technical impediments were removed ; but such cases would not be sufficient in number to make much change in the general condition of the country, and such purchases would be

chiefly made by men already so prosperous as to be naturally averse to anarchy. In general, the farmers cannot purchase their landlord's interests unless they get considerable assistance from the State.

An objection to the interference of the State in such matters is sometimes founded on the maxim that the State should not interfere in matters of buying and selling, or lending, or borrowing between private individuals, and this is undoubtedly true. The State should not engage in any mercantile transaction for the sake of making a profit by it. But this rule is not applicable to the case where the State is called upon to give or lend money, or to incur some pecuniary liability in order to promote some object of great public utility. This is eminently the case when the object is to make such a useful and important change in the condition of Ireland as would follow from a numerous peasant proprietary.

Although the expectation of financial profit should not influence our Government as an inducement to enter into such transactions, yet it may be useful to show that the required assistance may be given to the tenant without loss or risk.

I shall assume or admit that in many cases it may be necessary for the State to advance all the purchase-money, and that the tenant will in many cases refuse to pay for interest a larger sum than he at present pays for rent, although this payment of interest is only to endure for a limited period. But we may assume it as certain that every farmer will be glad to purchase his farm and to borrow money for the purpose, provided he is not required to pay for interest a larger sum than he is at present bound to pay as rent, the interest to be paid only for a limited period, whereas the rent is a perpetual charge.

At present, the agents of the State are permitted to lend only a certain proportion of the purchase-money. This is

not a wise rule, and must, in many cases, make it impossible for a farmer to purchase his farm. To secure the loan is no doubt the intention of the rule, but it is not necessary for this purpose. Take the case of two farmers, holding similar farms at a rent of £50 a-year each. One thousand pounds at twenty years' purchase is the price to be paid for the landlord's interest. The first tenant spends five hundred pounds in solid and permanent improvements on the land; the second tenant does nothing: they both apply for a loan. The second succeeds, because, having spent no money on his farm, he is able to pay up the required sum of £250, or one-fourth of the purchase-money. The other tenant is refused, because, having laid out his money on the land instead of keeping it in an old stocking, he is not able to pay the required sum in cash; and yet the security which he offers is better than that which is accepted from his companion, as the value of his farm is increased by the £500 which he laid out in improvements. When the Land Act declares the tenant entitled to the value of his improvements, the State in its dealings with the tenant should allow him that value. There are many other cases in which the estate of the tenant is of such value as to afford full security for the purchase-money of the rent.

It is reasonable, therefore, that the rule which requires the tenant to pay a proportion of the purchase-money should be abolished, and that the persons intrusted with the management of the loan should have power to advance the entire purchase-money if they are satisfied with the security offered by the tenant.

A reason sometimes given for requiring the tenant to pay part of the purchase-money out of his own resources is the apprehension that otherwise he might be oppressed by the weight of his debts. He might be in a worse position when paying interest to the lender, instead of rent to

the landlord. It is clear that there can be no ground for this apprehension if the tenant is permitted to redeem the loan by an annuity not greater than the rent which he was previously bound to pay.

That this may be done without loss to the State is clear from the following considerations. The price of consols proves that the State can borrow money at less than $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent interest. A loan borrowed at this rate of interest will be paid off by an annuity of 5 per cent, to continue for a term of thirty-five years. Now suppose the rent of a farm to be £50 a-year, and to be bought for twenty years' purchase—viz., £1000. The State pays this sum to the landlord and becomes entitled to an annuity of £50 a-year for thirty-five years, which, in that period, will replace the money lent, with $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent interest, without any burthen on the tenant beyond the rent which he is at present bound to pay. At the end of that period the tenant becomes absolute owner of the land, rent free.

A larger purchase-money might be paid by increasing the period for which the annuity is to be payable, but this will seldom be necessary, as where land is worth more than twenty years' purchase, the tenant is generally a thriving man, who can afford to pay a portion of the purchase-money out of his own resources. So great an extension of the term of the annuity will weaken the disposition of the tenant to buy, as it will make it improbable that he himself or his children would live to derive any benefit from the purchase. If the period of thirty-five years is adopted, the only restriction necessary to be placed on the managers of the loan fund is, that they should never lend more than twenty years' purchase of the rent.

The purchase should be made with the consent of both landlord and tenant, and where all the tenants of any property within a ring-fence are not willing to buy, the State should have power to purchase the entire, and to

stand in the landlord's shoes with respect to all farms which the tenants refuse to buy. They may then either receive the rents themselves, or dispose of them to the public, or gradually convey them to the occupying tenants in exchange for annuity. There is no reason to apprehend that the necessity for such purchases will arise to any considerable extent.

As the rate of interest is so small, and the value of the annuity accepted in exchange for the purchase-money is calculated on the principle of supposing the gales paid punctually as they become due, it is necessary that the law should enforce this punctuality. The State should have the fullest power to recover the annuity, and should be entitled to interest at 4 per cent on every gale more than ten days in arrear.

It would be a useful measure to provide that if the people in the neighbourhood throw any difficulties in the way of recovering the annuity, it shall be a charge on the district, to be recovered with the county cess. The annuity is a property purchased by the State. If it is not recovered, the loss must fall either upon the public generally or upon some portion of it; and it is reasonable that the loss should be borne by those by whose misconduct it has been caused. This provision will not be often called into action. Its mere existence will be sufficient, as it is not likely that a man's neighbours will assist or encourage him to resist the payment of a just debt, when the consequence of a successful resistance will be that they must pay it themselves.

As part of each payment is a discharge of part of the principal sum lent, and only a part is to be considered as income, the tenant ought not to be allowed the entire income-tax on the annuity. An allowance of half the income-tax will be sufficient. Thus, if £100 is lent to be repaid by £5 a-year for thirty-five years, or £175 alto-

gether, of this sum £100 goes to the discharge of capital, leaving £75 only properly entitled to a deduction for income-tax; but as the income payments are made during the earlier parts of the term, an allowance of half the income-tax will be a sufficiently accurate adjustment of the tenant's rights.

If there are arrears of rent due at the time of the purchase, they should be bought from the landlord by agreement, and the price should be added to the purchase-money, to be redeemed by a 5 per cent annuity for thirty-five years.

The tenant should be encouraged to anticipate his payments. His estate may be made a saving-bank for him, by permitting him to pay in advance the last gale then remaining unpaid of the annuity, with an allowance of discount for the intervening period. Thus, if the tenant paying an annuity of £5 should, at the end of the first year, wish to redeem the last year's gale of the annuity, he may redeem that sum of £5 by a present payment of £1, 11s., the residue—£3, 9s.—being allowed for discount. If this appeared to be too remote a return for his money, he should be allowed a rateable abatement of the annuity according to the number of years unexpired. Thus, if at the end of ten years he wishes to invest the sum of £20, he will for this payment get a reduction of £1, 4s. 3d. yearly in the annuity which he is bound to pay. The tenant should have the right to choose in which of those two modes he would wish his payments to be applied. He ought, with his conveyance, to be furnished with a table to show what allowance he would be entitled to for every payment in advance.

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